ICHARD NIXON'S MEANS OF DESCENT, BY ALAN BRINKLEY

OCTOBER 1, 1990 · $2.95

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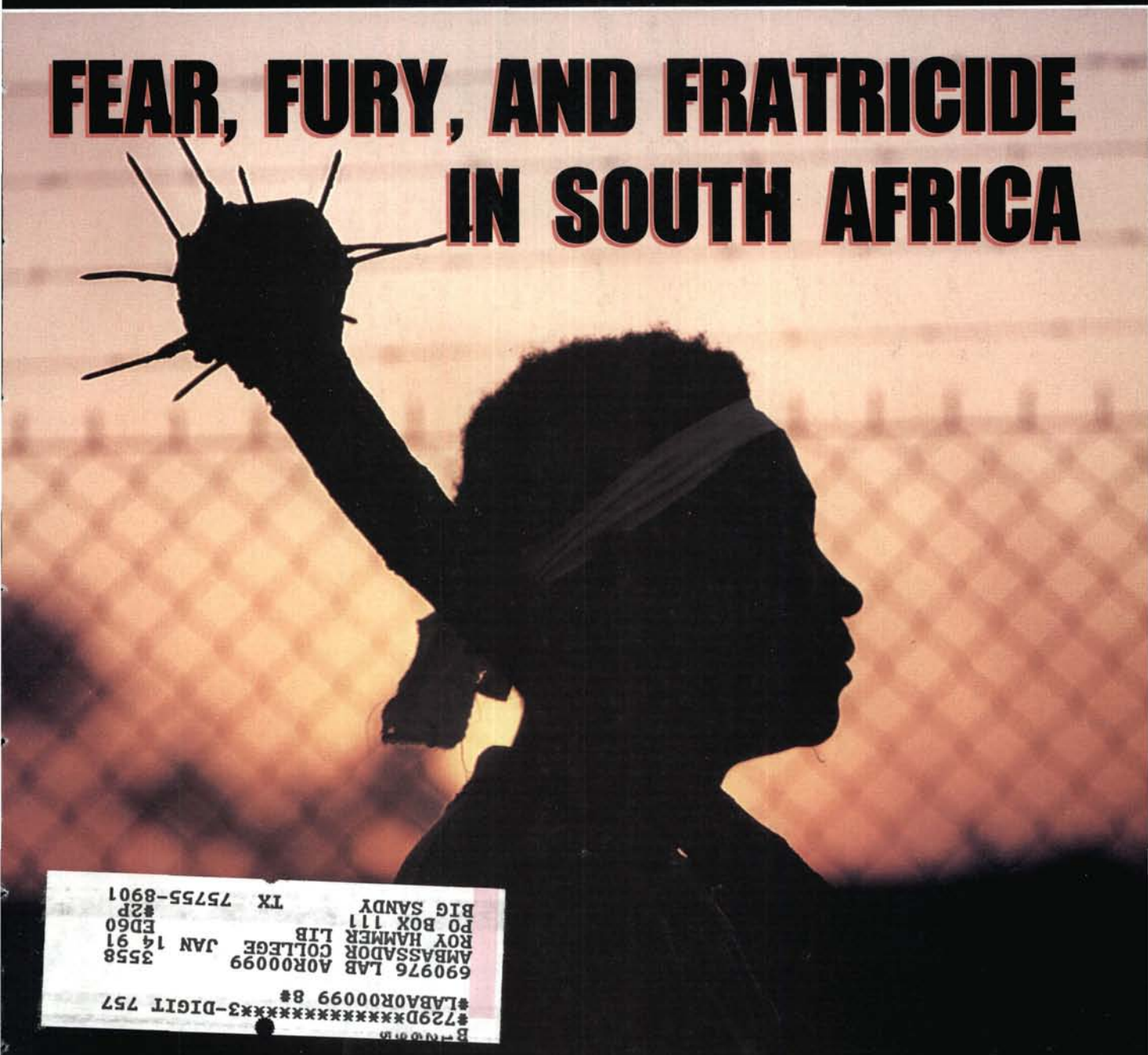

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The reality of tribal conflict *The Editors*

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The constitutional alternative *Jacob Weisberg*

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FROM WASHINGTON

Law and order

"America and the world must support the rule of law. And we will." —President Bush to a joint session of Congress, September 11

Kuwait, embarrassingly, was not a democracy or a "free" country, as the term is commonly understood, before August 2, and still won't be one when and if the Emir is restored. Saudi Arabia suffers the same unfortunate defect. So to justify American actions in the Persian Gulf, President Bush cannot call upon the usual rhetoric about democracy and freedom. Instead, the reigning concept is "order." Saddam Hussein, he says, has assaulted "the very essence of international order and civilized ideals."

The notion of "order" as a supreme value in the affairs of nations is not universally accepted. In fact, it is at the heart of international law, an area of thought the U.S. government has not had much time for during the past decade. "Order," and the related concept of "sovereignty," assert that the status quo has its own legitimate claims, simply because it is the status quo and disturbing it risks "chaos"—war, misery, death—as Bush now says.

The Reagan Doctrine was a specific rejection of international law as the illogical elevation of sovereignty over more important values such as democracy and freedom. Why should the forces for good sign a charter of self-abnegation? Legal rules are fine for fishing treaties, but not for more important matters. In Grenada, in Nicaragua, as recently as nine months ago in Panama, the Reagan and Bush administrations gave scant attention to the claims of sovereignty, or of various treaties we have signed promising to eschew force against fellow signatories.

International law can be ambiguous. And even under international law, sovereignty doesn't trump everything. State Department lawyers usually have been able to cobble together some legal rationalization for various American adventures over the decade. But the efforts became more and more halfhearted. By the end, the contradiction could no longer be contained in any gray area. Our assertion of America's right to promote American values by violent means was incompatible with even the least ambitious claims of international law to protect sovereignty and limit the use of force. Conservative thinkers circled in for the kill. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan writes, with endearing overstatement, in his new book, *On the Law of Nations* (Harvard University Press): "In the annals of forgetfulness there is nothing quite to compare with the fading from the American mind of the idea of the law of nations."

Yet suddenly, in the Gulf crisis, Bush cannot cite international law often enough. "The occupation of Kuwait is illegal under international law." Iraq is "an outrageous violator of international law." "And so my message [to Iraq] is . . . : Adhere to international law." The economic sanctions: "international law . . . must be enforced." The hostages: "contrary to international law." Negotiate with Hussein? He "has been so resistant to complying with international law" that there is no point.

International law—it's not just for wussies, anymore. Why the unacknowledged change of heart? International law serves two vital purposes for the United States in this crisis. First, with democracy unavailable, it is a high-minded value we can legitimately claim to be protecting, thereby avoiding undue emphasis on oil and other unromantic and narrowly strategic concerns. Oh sure, a police state like Iraq is worse than a feudal kingdom like Kuwait. But you cannot ask Americans to die for that kind of comparative awfulocracy. Something nobler is required.

Second, the principles and procedures of international law have been essential to gaining the support of the rest of the world. And everyone agrees that gaining the world's support is Bush's greatest triumph.

Robert Bork has written, "The major difficulty with international law is that it converts what are essentially problems of international morality . . . into arguments about law that are largely drained of morality." In fact, this is actually an advantage of all law, not just international law. Even without an automatic enforcement mechanism (international law's obvious defect), it is easier to get people to agree to apply a pre-existing set of rules than to agree ad hoc on the moral merits of a particular policy. And even if we disagree on the morality of a specific case, we still share a vested interest in the rule of law generally, which inclines us to follow the rules even when a particular application doesn't suit us.

Furthermore, as Moynihan presciently points out in his book, "Allied and nonaligned nations . . . can far more readily support (or at least accept) American policies if our conduct is seen to be based on law that binds us as well as them." *The New York Times* reports, as if revealing something, that the Bush administration's early resort to the United Nations was a pragmatic decision, "rather than flowing from a set of lofty principles." That's the point. International law is valuable—useful—even to superpower America.

To take one small example within the large one, there are already disputes about what constitutes "humanitarian" food supplies under the U.N. embargo of Iraq. To what extent you bend the embargo to alleviate the suffering of innocents is a tough moral question on which reasonable people can surely differ. It is extremely useful for the United States to be able to say: you may not decide this for yourself. Under the law, exceptions are up to the Security Council. That is far easier than stopping each ship for a moral argument.

Writing in *Newsweek*, George Will deplores Bush's rediscovery of international law. "President Bush will regret this recourse if he decides his policy requires removal of Saddam Hussein." True: international law makes resort to war harder. But all of Bush's hope to end this crisis short of war depends on other nations taking him seriously about international law.

Should he be taken seriously? Is international law more than just a rhetorical convenience? Having sneered at it for a decade, then having found it necessary, will the United States abandon it once again when it ceases to be convenient? This is not merely a hoity-toity question of not wishing one's country to appear hypocritical. Obviously, even the rhetorical usefulness of international law depends on others believing that this time we really mean it.

Really meaning it means giving up our own freedom of action on occasion, and allowing our own case-by-case moral assessments to be constrained by rules that will sometimes strike us as wrong. It means respecting the sovereignty of governments we rightly don't like. It means allowing the judgment of other nations to stay our hand sometimes, even when we think that judgment is mistaken. Law that need not be obeyed if you disagree with it is not law. If we want meaningful international law to be available when we find it useful, we must respect it even when we don't.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Mission irresponsible

To the editors:

In reference to your editorial proposing "large-scale aerial bombing" of Iraqi installations ("Fighting Dirty," September 10 & 17), are you nuts?

If you want to see the tenuous support of the United States in Saudi Arabia completely destroyed, the execution of hostages, and 747s blown up for a great many months ahead, then send the troops in on one of those famous Ronald Reagan, medals-to-everyone-involved missions.

But do you really think the Iraqi people will turn against their great military leader because the United States makes a grand show of force? If so, you do not understand what the fire in their bellies is about.

JEFFERY DEYOE
Spicer, Minnesota

Politically correct art

To the editors:

In "Lighten Up, America" (September 10 & 17) Robert Brustein claims that because he has no say over the funding of the SDI or Stealth bomber programs, so too his fellow citizens should have no say over how the NEA funds arts programs. But Brustein confuses being on the losing side of a political argument with having no say. The defense budget is the result of a political process in which more voters, in the '80s, sided with politicians who supported these programs than opposed them.

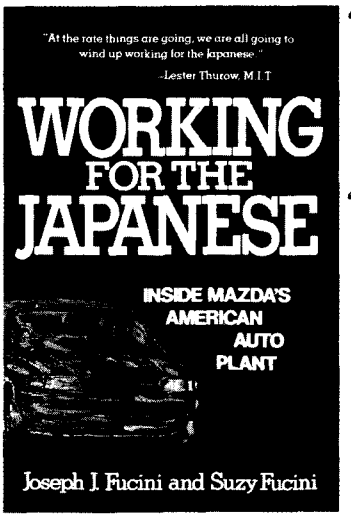
And is Brustein right about an arts policy of "excellence," as he defines it? I'm certain that any panel on which Robert Brustein sits distributes my taxes to the most excellent. But lots of people at the NEA, from John Frohnmayer on down, would gag at that notion. It's obvious that the NEA makes many grants on the basis of political correctness, "innovativeness," and geographic, racial, and sexual preference concerns.

Yes, America does suffer at the hands of puritans. That's precisely why we can't, like the European countries Brustein envies, have a national arts policy that produces anything but mediocrity and divisiveness. Let's bite the bullet: the NEA is a mess, it's bad for artists and the arts, and it should be allowed to die with dignity.

SAMUEL E. SCHULMAN
Brooklyn, New York

"At the rate things are going, we are all going to end up working for the Japanese."
– LESTER THUROW, MIT

More and more Japanese companies now own and operate factories and offices in the U.S. What is it like for American workers, with their ingrained habits of individualism, to work for Japanese companies which expect results through devotion to harmony, cooperation and the "team concept?" To find out, journalists Joseph and Suzy Fucini spent three years inside the Mazda auto plant in Flat Rock, Michigan. What they witnessed and now report is a head-on collision of cultures in the workplace that may well put a big dent in the American Dream.


"At the rate things are going, we are all going to wind up working for the Japanese."
-Lester Thurow, M.I.T
WORKING FOR THE JAPANESE
INSIDE MAZDA'S AMERICAN AUTO PLANT
Joseph J. Fucini and Suzy Fucini

"Triumphs as an eye-opening, sweat-stained account of what goes on behind the plant doors."
—BusinessWeek

"Astute but troubling ...the dream turned into a dark night of pain. The history recounted by this book is **important because it has significance beyond its time and locale."**
—The New York Times

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Nixon's lie-brary

To the editors:

Sidney Blumenthal's petulant complaint that the Nixon Library and birthplace is replete with half-truths is unwarranted (Yorba Linda Diarist, "The Last New Nixon," August 20 & 27). Although George Washington had many other virtues, he is known as the president who could not tell a lie. Nixon had many other failings, but his place in history is secure as the congressman and president who lied to the American people. The persons responsible for the library deserve praise rather than criticism for making the perceptive decision to continue in this tradition.

LAWRENCE J. LATTO
Arlington, Virginia

Nobody agreed

To the editors:

Jacob Weisberg called me recently to ask why our PBS series, P.O.V. (Point of View), was not airing "Nobody Listened," a documentary about human rights abuses in Cuba. After reading "Nobody Watched" (August 13), I'm not sure why he took the time to interview me. Not one single quote attributed to me is accurate—every one is either entirely fabricated or so violently taken out of context as to distort what I said.

Weisberg manages to pack four pieces of badly mangled information into one very key sentence. "But after consulting his advisory board and delaying for many months, he rejected the film because of what he deemed its excessive length and its use of subtitles . . . and because it 'presented point of view as fact.' " As the producer of a series called P.O.V., I would never criticize a film by saying it "presented point of view as fact." And I would never object to subtitles on a film—we've shown subtitled films every season.

What I did say was that most members of the editorial committee thought the two-hour version of the film was too long, repetitive, and confusing in places, and that one committee member objected to the non-stop subtitles. I told Weisberg that I chose not to override a vote in which only one person on a committee of twelve felt we should show the film. That didn't make it into his story either.

Weisberg quotes me as saying, " 'Some people [on the editorial committee] had problems with the politics' " of the film. He adds, "Weiss himself was apparently one of them." In fact, when he asked me whether members of the committee had such problems, I said some people might have had problems with the politics; it never came up in the discussion.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

OCTOBER 1, 1990

THE TRIBAL FACTOR

Just as a chemical bath brings out the latent image in a photographic print, the tumult of political change in South Africa is bringing out the latent reality of tribalism. The world is learning that South Africa is more than just a—literally—black-and-white issue. The hierarchical skin-color stratification superimposed by apartheid obscured and concealed a vast array of cross-cutting ethnic, tribal, cultural, political, and other rivalries, some of them quite as lethal as the similar rivalries that convulsed Europe in times past. These rivalries are now a sanguinary fact, one that cannot be ignored—and a South African settlement that fails to take account of this fact, though it might result in a transfer of power, would be a settlement that left too much unsettled.

The "liberation first, education later" campaign launched by the African National Congress in the townships some six years ago planted seeds of disaster that are now bearing their strange fruit. Although the children of parents with some money and initiative were sent to church (and other private) schools in white areas or back to the "homelands" for schooling, this particular manifestation of the struggle against apartheid put hundreds of thousands of youngsters, the sons and daughters of the multitudes, out of the classroom and into the street, fitfully or permanently. The disaster is not simply that they now lack even the rudimentary tools of literacy and numeracy to make something of their own lives. It is that, away from society's most basic socializing institution (except for the family, itself often atomized by apartheid's residence rules), the unschooled and unlettered took to varieties of crime that were disguised as political actions. Many high school students who tried to sit for exams have only scars and bruises to show for their efforts, and some are not lucky enough to be alive to show anything. The "comrades," as the young militants vaguely affiliated with the ANC call themselves, made a specialty of burning down the houses of those who want to learn and those who want to teach. But the lawlessness that spreads terror under ideological masks is mostly just wanton wickedness, almost all of it intrablack: beatings, muggings, and what is called "jackrolling"—otherwise known as kidnapping and rape. These now are altogether common phenomena, and it is no surprise that they are. What can one expect from armies of restless and embittered youths, already victims of apartheid, who don't know how to read or write or think?

Now the blood is being shed in torrents, the blood of black men stabbed or shot by other black men. No women, to speak of, participate in these brutal transactions; this is a macho society where men, mostly young men, do the killing and the dying. Some 600 have died in recent weeks, and God only knows how many have been maimed or rendered homeless.

The massing of murderous urban formations across battle lines in squatter settlements and townships is not a new thing in South Africa. The government estimates that 5,000 have been killed in similar violence during the last half-decade. Black activists say the number is much higher. What is new, besides the increasing rate of the killings, is the (belatedly) increasing recognition of what lies behind them.

For years Western journalists have tended to pin responsibility for the carnage on Inkatha, the political wing of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's mostly Zulu movement. In retrospect this judgment appears to have been, at best, incomplete. The exiled African National Congress and its domestic surrogate, the United Democratic Front, had their own organized thugs who attacked and were attacked by Inkatha's organized thugs in bitter street fights and ambushes. And, as Lwazi Shongwe, a University of Natal sociologist, has written, "The worst violence occurs in areas which are not under the hegemony of either UDF (ANC) or Inkatha factions."

Though much of the violence is what might be called pre-political, the political stakes are nevertheless high. The ANC's goal is to retain its precarious position as the

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single anointed legatee of the oppressed black majority. It has tried to delegitimize the forces around Buthelezi by shoving them off the political stage; indeed, ANC hard-liners were so intent on excluding Buthelezi from the political system that they kept Nelson Mandela from sharing a platform with him where both leaders would appeal for intergroup peace. The ANC has also tried to delegitimize smaller political competitors, the Pan-Africanists and the Black Consciousness movement primarily. Inkatha, for its part, has been fighting to get into the system, and for a seat at the negotiating table where South Africa's future will be decided.

The ANC has called off its armed struggle against the white regime. But the armed struggle among black political groupings goes on without respite, and ANC militants are among the most enthusiastic participants. This hardly means that Inkatha has taken a Gandhian path. On the contrary, the violence is probably more in Inkatha's interest than the ANC's, since it demonstrates that the ANC's hold on black South Africa is far from complete. And in recent weeks there have been increasing reports—many from ANC partisans—of collusion between Inkatha supporters and extremist elements within the police. But Inkatha is by no means the only aggressor, and ANC people are not the only casualties.

Another reality that is beginning to dawn on the world is that Inkatha is not the only political movement with a tribal, or ethnic, base. In fact, the ANC itself is dominated and populated largely by Xhosas. Mandela himself hails from a Xhosa chieftain family; indeed, as Conor Cruise O'Brien has pointed out, Mandela has been extremely delicate with Xhosa nobility of the homeland. The ANC is not, of course, a Xhosa phenomenon to quite the same degree that Inkatha is a Zulu one; it includes many Sothos, Tswanas, and others, while Inkatha's non-Zulu membership is much less important. Still, the fighting that has been waged in the name of the ANC, and particularly the fighting of recent weeks, has been waged by Xhosas with Xhosa battle cries against Xhosa enemies. The current intrablack conflicts may be cloaked in the modern slogans of modern nation-building, but the passions driving black men to kill other black men are the tribal passions to which they were born. In that sense, South Africa, though more advanced than its northern neighbors, replicates their experience.

Among many Americans (and many South Africans as well) tribalism is a taboo word in discussions of South Africa. It carries primitive and pejorative connotations. But calling it ethnicity instead doesn't still the discomfort. The received image of the country is of white oppressors and black oppressed. That is much of the story, but not all of it. The image does not take account of the large and also persecuted Indian and Coloured (mixed-race) populations, among which there is apprehension about a future dominated by the ANC. And it leaves the black oppressed undifferentiated and undifferentiable. Many Americans are still surprised to encounter black opponents of the regime who reject the ANC and adhere to other organizations. And these Americans are particularly reluctant to hear that tribes or ethnic groups divide the black populace, and divide it bitterly.

The ideology of the ANC is an amalgam of strains descended from the Western secular enlightenment. Accordingly, that ideology sees tribal identifications and tribal loyalties as anachronistic, reactionary, counterhistorical, and epiphenomenal. Indeed, the stated attitude of the ANC toward the tribes that constitute black South Africa is somewhat analogous to the traditional perspective of Communist parties about nationalisms: they are lags from the past that are annoying irrelevancies in the present and can be confidently expected to disappear in the future. The pervasiveness of this attitude among the ANC elite is no great surprise: on many issues touched by theory the ANC has been thoroughly instructed by Marxism and Marxists. Those who have mistaken ANC doctrine in this matter for fact are currently experiencing a shock as profound as did those whose analysis of Soviet reality omitted the volatile facts of Baltic, Armenian, Ukrainian, and other ostensibly long-interred nationalisms.

Although the South African tribes, unlike the Soviet nationalities, have shown no particular interest in separate political sovereignty, there is another salient similarity here. The Soviet Communist Party may have denied any specific ethnic purposes, but it both served and exploited the distinctive nationalism of the Russian people. The ANC has a comparable and complicated relationship to the Xhosa tribe. American and European enthusiasts of the ANC, therefore, have also been enthusiasts for Xhosa interests against those of other tribes in South Africa—despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that until the most recent fratricide they hardly knew that such interests even existed.

The South African government, of course, has itself long bolstered and exploited the tribal divisions among blacks. This was one of its purposes in designing the unjust and demeaning scheme for tribal homelands. Foreign friends of the anti-apartheid movement have resisted recognizing the existence of these divisions lest they seem to offer aid and comfort to the apartheid regime. All the same, the divisions exist. And though tribalism has been affected and sometimes muted by urbanization, it is still a vital and volatile force even in and around the biggest cities. This would be true even without Pretoria's traditionally malign, usually clumsy, and sometimes ineffectual efforts to make it truer.

Like nationalism, tribalism can be both life-enhancing and life-destroying. Even now, we suspect, the balance is unclear. Tribes cushion people from hostile environments. They connect families to the past and to a living culture that will exist tomorrow. In South Africa today, of course, tribalism is most obviously expressed in rampages across the ravaged divides of black life. But it cannot be wished away. Any policy that pretends the tribe is already in history's dustbin or is a contrivance of reactionaries is doomed to failure. Its premise is simply wrong.

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THE TIE THAT BINDS?

It's all but official—it's in *The New York Times*. The moderate Arab states, according to a September 10 *Times* report by John Kifner, want the United States "to eliminate President Saddam Hussein and destroy his powerful arsenal. . . . A tacit consensus that a military strike is probably inevitable is emerging. Some leaders are saying it should be sooner rather than later." Of course, their preference is by itself not sufficient reason for the U.S. to oblige. But it is good to have the air cleared: the countries in the Arab world with which Washington has its most important long-term relationships and long-term common interests—including the most populous country (Egypt) and the richest (Saudi Arabia)—hope that the U.S. will, as Nadav Safran put it in these pages last week, "quickly destroy or drastically reduce Iraq's military capabilities."

That's how TNR has read their predilections, too. For these governments, after all, the present danger may be a matter of nothing less than survival. And the determination of the United States actually to rid the region and the world of the threat from Baghdad is a much more serious test of U.S. friendship for the salient Arabs than whether Washington succeeds in pressuring Israel to make this or that concession on the West Bank. If the United States fails its Arab friends now in their moment of true peril, and particularly when the coincidence of concerns is so palpable, they will not easily trust America again.

Desert people are good at telling the difference between a mirage and the real thing. And some of these particular desert people—though they fear that in the end the U.S. won't take the decisive military steps needed to curb Iraqi power—understand that if steps are taken it will be the U.S. that takes them. They know that American power and American commitment are the real thing, and that the multilateral cover President Bush has so skillfully constructed is the mirage. The savvier Middle Eastern players read the evidence very well: aside from Britain and Turkey, even the NATO allies have been stinting in their material support of the great venture. West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl wasn't obfuscating when he said that the buildup of forces and weapons in the Gulf was essentially a bilateral arrangement between Riyadh and Washington. And, of course, he used that fact to relieve his country of any obligation to share the burden for an enterprise of which it would be a primary beneficiary, and which might never have become necessary if not for the eagerness of German industry to sell Hussein the components of his unconventional war machine. The other allies—well, the other allies are providing a garage ship here, a sealift facility there . . . and lots of rhetorical support.

Rhetorical support is also mostly what was provided by the U.N. Security Council. And with that rhetorical support comes an implicit constraint on the use of force, because actual fighting would strain and maybe sunder the Security Council's happy unanimity. This tension protects Hussein's futuristic arsenal, which is so dangerous to his neighbors—a high price to have paid for what is probably a temporary diplomatic and political asset at best.

President Bush went all the way to Helsinki in his spanking new 747 to make sure that his friend Mikhail Gorbachev was still signed on to the prolonged siege strategy toward Iraqi, and the Soviet leader said he was. "Our preference is to resolve the crisis peacefully, and we will be united against Iraq's aggression as long as the crisis exists," Bush and Gorbachev declared in the key paragraph of their joint communiqué. "However, we are determined to see this aggression end, and if the current steps fail to end it, we are prepared to consider additional ones consistent with the U.N. Charter. We must demonstrate beyond any doubt the aggression cannot and will not pay." These are strong words as such documents go, and it is not difficult to read into them a tacit Soviet acknowledgment that armed force may become necessary; moreover, when Bush spoke of military measures at the post-summit press conference, Gorbachev did not demur. But he did contradict a questioner who asked about a hypothetical Soviet contribution to such measures, saying: "I did not say that if Iraq does not withdraw peacefully we're going to have recourse to military methods. I did not state that. I do not state that." It is not difficult to read into that an intention to object if the shooting starts.

As Senator Robert Dole, for once right on the Middle East, observed, all this was at best the equivalent of the Russians saying, "I'll hold your coat." Bush did not succeed in getting Gorbachev to commit any forces to the Gulf theater (not that we'd really want them there). He didn't even succeed in persuading Gorbachev to withdraw the thousands of Soviet military and other advisers from the outlaw country. In the meantime Washington may have acquired yet another impediment to its freedom of action in the region. The Helsinki summit helped reassure the world that the Gulf crisis carries no risk of East-West confrontation. But when push comes to shove the Soviet tie may turn out to be the tie that binds.

In exchange, we get some vague sort of diplomatic cooperation—a shriveled Soviet carrot to go along with the American big stick. The truth is the Soviets bring little by way of influence to the situation. All of the Arabs know that the bread lines in Moscow are longer than they are in Baghdad and Basra. Of course, the Soviet cachet in the region was not based on bread but on bombs—but even that link is precarious these days. It's not likely that Gorbachev's crimped assent to Bush scares Hussein. He's got a lot more to be scared of.

At some level Washington does seem to grasp that Moscow won't be much of a player in any Iraqi scenario. So the State Department has premised its magnification of Soviet centrality to a resolution of the current crisis on hopes the Russians will be able to help us with other Middle Eastern matters. Various unidentified high officials have been eagerly telling reporters that the Soviet Union might now persuade its PLO and Syrian friends to compromise with Israel, or that Moscow might somehow assist in a stabilization of the Lebanon situation. Fat chance they'd succeed, even if they wanted to. Nonethe-

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less, Gorbachev apparently demanded these linkages as a quid pro quo in Helsinki. But this puts American certification on the nonsense logic that couples the uncoupleable. And, as it happens, it also encourages old Soviet mischief. This mischief is best expressed in the notion of an international conference to settle once and for all the torments of the area. This has its lures, of course, not least to the Soviet Union, which presumably would sit as conference co-chairman. But the model simply does not conform to the realities of the region. It is worse than a delusion; it is a cruel delusion. How strange that the administration should be willing to give it warrant in exchange for so little.

Continuing improvement in the character of U.S.-Soviet relations is an appropriate purpose of American foreign policy. It is also a reciprocal test of the willingness of the two countries genuinely to liquidate the cold war. But by now there are far greater threats to world peace and minimal civic decencies than the traditional animus between East and West. The aggressions of Iraq against its neighbors and its proven willingness to terrorize to the furthest reaches of the Middle East are paradigmatic of new and different post-cold war perils. The present peril cannot be ended without force; in fact, it cannot be ended without the United States actually employing force against massed Iraqi power. The goal of ending this peril should not be held hostage to a paralyzing international legality or by the sentimental requirements of joint Russian-American communiqués.

NOTEBOOK

SHOT IN THE ARM: Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl F. Gates celebrated the first anniversary of the Bush-Bennett War on Drugs by advising the Senate Judiciary Committee that casual marijuana and cocaine users "ought to be taken out and shot." "We're in a war," he expanded later, and in wartime, every toke constitutes "treason." If this sounds like a mad passage from *Catch-22*, so does much of Gates's career. His passion for militaristic fantasy first emerged in 1980, when he volunteered his SWAT team to rescue the American hostages in Iran. He shares with the drug czar an obsession with the gallows. The reason for targeting recreational users, he explained to the Senate, is that "poor addicts shot [sic] themselves already. They don't need us to execute them." Should they need us to execute them in the future, however, Gates's sidearm is at the ready.

WELCOME TO THE CLUB: Yes, there is a new post-cold war world order emerging, and President Bush's National Security Council staff deserves credit for asking other nations to help pay for it. Critics who say the United States is panhandling or is making its troops into mercenaries just don't understand the new rules. This is a club, and the United States is both president and secretary-treasurer. In addition to its main activity, isolating Iraq, the club has undertaken (just in time) a massive life-saving operation in the Jordanian desert, where 100,000 people might have died of exposure, disease, or thirst had it not been for $150 million in relief pledges, including $41 million ($12 million from Japan, $10 million from the United States, $10-plus million from Europe) for airplanes to carry home stranded Asian refugees. There are still hundreds of thousands trapped in Iraq and Kuwait, but a good beginning has been made. The same can't be said for the effort to help poor countries otherwise hit by the Gulf crisis, including Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt. The administration complains that Japan (which has promised, sort of, a measly $2 billion), the European Community, and Scandinavia are far behind in paying their dues, but it refuses to say by how much. It ought to adopt the policy employed in other clubs: post the names of the deadbeats and the amounts they owe.

HISTORY STILL KAPUT, EXPERT AVERS:

Hussein Has Not Revived History

By Francis Fukuyama

Wasn't being Hegel enough? When Francis Fukuyama, the former State Department deputy planning director, discovered the end of history on the eve of the revolution in Eastern Europe, he presented himself as the medium of the universal zeitgeist in the tradition of the German philosopher. Now Fukuyama sees a resemblance between himself and another great mind. "Toward the end of his life, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau descended into a state of unhappy paranoia, believing that there was an international conspiracy to defame him and to deliberately distort his ideas. I sometimes feel a little bit like Rousseau," writes Fukuyama in *The Los Angeles Times* of September 9. We look forward to his next entry in what now appears to be a series: Why I Feel Like Ludwig Wittgenstein When the Concrete Particulars Make Me Lose Sleep.

SEMI-TOUGH:

Bush, Gorbachev Toughen Stand Against Iraq
—*The Washington Post*, September 10, page one

Bush agrees to soften Iraq embargo
—*The Washington Times*, same day, page one

DOUBLE FAULT: It's Sunday. As his deadline approaches, the desperate columnist works the remote control, searching for meaning: "Sampras, the

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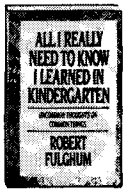

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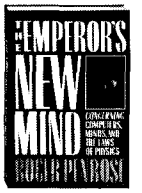

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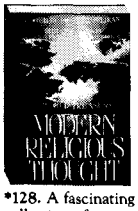

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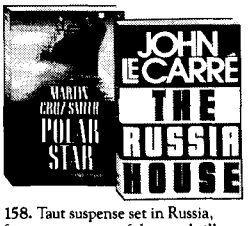

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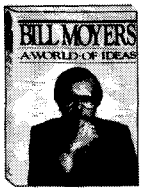

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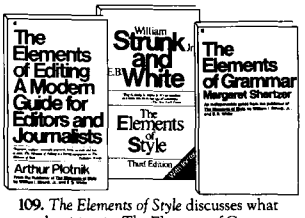

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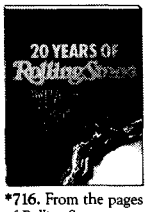

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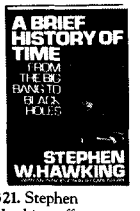

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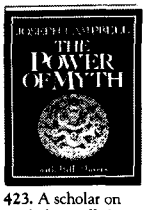

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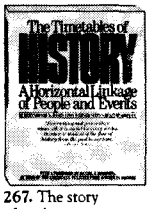

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nineteen-year-old winner, is Mr. Cool; and Agassi, the twenty-year-old loser, is Mr. Punk, with his gaudy clothes and earring. But both are indelibly men of the '90s. . . . Bush and Gorbachev, on the other hand, are clearly men of another time, struggling to adapt to the ambiguities and paradoxes of a new world order. Both have helped fashion this new world, but neither can be certain how to command it. . . . What the Sunday television contrast made evident is that only the young—whether nations or individuals—really have the freedom to say it is a brand-new day."—David Broder, *The Washington Post*, Tuesday, September 11

JACOB THE UNWISE: In the hour of crisis of the National Endowment for the Arts, Rabbi Jacob Neusner has distinguished himself as its advisory council's least helpful member. In August Neusner mounted a campaign for stronger restrictions on the NEA than even Jesse Helms has demanded, proposing a ban on funding for any project that "advocates or promotes a particular political, ideological, religious, or partisan point of view, or a particular program of social action or change." Landscape paintings might still qualify for government support under this rule, though it's debatable. Neusner was defeated by the board on a 10-2 vote. Later the same day, he stood as the lone vote against a resolution sponsored by NEA chairman John Frohnmayer to reaffirm the agency's commitment "to bring quality art to the American people" by fair procedures, careful analysis, and an opposition to obscenity. Most recently the difficult rabbi wrote to *The New York Times* arguing that the NEA does little good because of "a projection" that slightly more of this year's money will go to the "infrastructure of the arts" than to artists themselves. By why should that bother him? Doesn't he think it's the artists themselves who are the problem?

ZZZZZ: On the op-ed page of the August 31 *New York Times*, Martin Malia, professor of Russian history at Berkeley, comes out of the closet and admits he was "Z," the mysterious author of "To the Stalin Mausoleum," an article in *Daedalus* that caused a big stir back in January when excerpts were reprinted on that same op-ed page. Readers of this magazine will recall that Malia was quickly flushed out in these pages (see "The Long Fax" by Lionel Barber, February 19). Congratulations to Mr. Barber (the *Financial Times*'s man in Washington), whose sleuthing did the flushing. Coming soon: Barber reveals that Batman is, in reality, millionaire Bruce Wayne.

MARCUS CUNLIFFE, R.I.P.: We are grieved to note the passing of Marcus Cunliffe, who died September 2 at the age of sixty-eight. Like his friend Henry Fairlie (at whose memorial service last March he spoke), Cunliffe was an Englishman who loved America and who wrote about it with wit and erudition. Before moving to this city for good in 1980 to become University Professor at George Washington University, he had a short and distinguished career as a World War II combat officer in the Royal Tank Regiment and a long and distinguished one as a pioneering scholar of American studies at the Universities of Manchester and Sussex. His many books and essays about the life and cult of George Washington came as close as anyone ever has to bringing alive the man behind the chiseled mask of the godlike soldier-president. Marcus Cunliffe was a frequent contributor of book reviews to this magazine and a friend of many of its editors and writers. Our sympathies go out to his wife, Phyllis Palmer, and to his children and grandchildren.

SCORE ONE FOR OUR TOWN: After the various humiliations of the Marion Barry mayoralty, the Marion Barry cocaine bust, the Marion Barry trial, and the Marion Barry recriminations, the Democratic voters of the District of Columbia have done something they have a right to be tentatively proud of. They have nominated Sharon Pratt Dixon, to all appearances the best of a field of five, to be Barry's successor. Ms. Dixon was the only candidate with the guts to call for Barry's resignation; and in the televised debates she was much the most articulate and forthright. She has never held elective public office before—an important reason for her upset victory—and there is always the chance she will turn out to be a disaster, too. But for the moment, Washingtonians can take a holiday from apologizing for their city. •

Saddam Hussein grounded Israel's doves.

PEACE NIX

By Yo'av Karny

Saddam Hussein may not necessarily go down in history as a modern-day Saladin, but he may well earn the distinction of becoming the father of Israeli neoconservatism. If Israelis in the early twenty-first century ever convene a Tel Aviv Second Thoughts conference (much like the one convened by Peter Collier and David Horowitz in 1987 to celebrate the death of the 1960s), they will likely look back on August 17, 1990, as the founding date of Israel's counter-counterculture.

On that Friday the editorial page of *Ha'aretz* carried an open letter from Peace Now expressing profound disappointment with the Palestinian leadership of the occupied territories, on account of their support for

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Saddam Hussein. On the same page was an op-ed piece by Yossi Sarid, a member of the Knesset and the parliamentary conscience of the Israeli left. His words were stunning to any regular reader of Israeli papers even if the rhetorical hyperbole was only half serious. "If it is possible," wrote Sarid, "to champion Saddam Hussein, who has murdered tens of thousands of his regime's opponents without batting an eye, who unleashed poison gas on Kurdish men, women, and children—then maybe it's not so bad to back the policies of Shamir, Sharon, and Rabin; compared to the crimes of Saddam Hussein, the sins of the government of Israel are as pure as the driven snow."

Interestingly, Sarid's piece was titled "Let Them Come Looking for Me," them being Yasir Arafat, Faisal Al-Husseini (considered the chief spokesman for West Bank Palestinians), and Abdul Wahab Daroushe (an independent Arab member of the Knesset). The Hebrew expression used in the title, *sheyechappesu otti,* is far more dismissive than may be suggested by a literal translation; the connotation is, to put it mildly, "get lost."

In the Israeli political context, Sarid is a leftist version of Winston Churchill in the political wilderness. A scion of the Zionist labor elite, he grew up among the country's most powerful political figures. They groomed him for greatness; and had he not bucked the establishment, he could now be vying for the leadership of the Labor Party. His eloquence (he ranks among the best of Israel's orators) as well as his boldness in defying convention turned him into a kind of cult figure in a society where politicians, not baseball players, occupy the most prominent places in a national hall of fame. Sarid's essay in *Ha'aretz* was, therefore, a dramatic event, a possible turning point.

Sarid and Peace Now were not Hussein's only casualties among the Israeli left. Remarkably similar sentiments had been voiced three days earlier by Yaron London, formerly a prime-time talk-show host on Israeli television, who is now a popular columnist for the mass-circulation daily *Yedi'ot Ahronot.* "Farewell, Husseini, Nusseibeh, Shalbieh and the rest of you 'authentic leaders,' " wrote London, referring to the most prominent Palestinian spokesmen in the territories. "This week you showed me what a fool I've been for the longest time. . . . When you come back asking for my support for your 'legitimate rights,' you'll find I have hearing trouble: my ears will still be ringing from your cheers for Saddam Hussein."

Even if Sarid and London's pique was somewhat akin to the anger of betrayed lovers, it was directly related to the greatest agony of the left throughout the 1970s and most of the 1980s: Are there any serious Palestinian interlocutors, or is the left pretty much negotiating with itself? An unanswered question, which cost the doves considerable grief, was "Where is the Palestinian 'Peace Now'?"—namely where are the Palestinians who are not only willing to speak to Israelis, but are also ready to make major concessions, starting with the acceptance of Israel's right to exist. In the late 1980s the Knesset enacted a law against contacts with "members of terrorist organizations" (i.e., the PLO), and Israeli peaceniks risked not only social isolation but prosecution and imprisonment as well. Deprived of a domestic power base, and rejected by potential Palestinian interlocutors in the West Bank, the "Peace Camp," as the disparate liberal groups are sometimes referred to, was suffering increasing marginalization.

Arafat's 1988 Geneva declaration, which renounced terror and recognized Israel's legitimacy, seemed to have reversed the doves' fortunes almost overnight. Leading Palestinians became more than eager to talk to any Israeli on his or her terms. A process started, however slow and exhausting, of diplomatic endeavors to bring official Israelis, not just the old peacenik crowd, face-to-face with PLO-sanctioned Palestinians. A growing number of Israelis—though not quite enough for an electoral majority—were actively reconsidering some of the greatest truisms of the previous twenty years, including "there is no Palestinian 'Peace Now.' " Last March it briefly looked as though Labor leader Shimon Peres would manage to form Israel's first ever dovish government, one bent on pursuing some sort of a dialogue with the Palestinians. The cruel anti-climax of his ultimate failure had more to do with the peculiarities of Israeli domestic politics than with Peres's foreign policy agenda.

Then came Arafat's shockingly affectionate pilgrimage to Baghdad shortly after the rape of Kuwait, as well as the emergence of Palestinian cheerleaders for Saddam Hussein in the West Bank, which seems to have undone the dramatic impact of the Geneva declaration. It is no longer the shameless ultra-Orthodox wheeler-dealers who don't give peace a chance, but the Palestinians themselves, who, supposedly, have now revealed their true colors.

Three weeks after the Iraqi invasion Dedi Tzucker, Sarid's fellow MK for the Civil Rights and Peace Movement (MCRP), and a founder of Peace Now, addressed an open letter to an East Jerusalem Palestinian activist under the banner "We Have Gone Back to 1987," that is, to the dark age that preceded Arafat's recognition of Israel. Peace Now quickly called off a petition drive urging formal Israeli-Palestinian dialogue that was planned to be held in both Israel proper and the occupied territories. Tzali Reshef, a Peace Now leader, told me: "At this point in time, the public's receptivity to this kind of message is not at its greatest." Reshef recalled two years of combined effort on the part of his movement and Palestinian leaders in the territories "to de-demonize the Palestinians, to portray them as worthy partners in dialogue. This was a Sisyphean labor. Just when we were reaching the top of the mountain, the stone has been rolled down the hill further than before."

Even more troubling than Saddam Hussein's popularity in the West Bank was the overt sympathy for him shown by two independent Arab members of the Knesset, Abdul Wahab Daraoushe and Muhammad Mi'ari. Palestinians living in the occupied territories are one thing; but Arab citizens of Israel singing the praises of one who vows to asphyxiate the country with mustard

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gas are quite another, and it touched one of the most sensitive nerves in Israeli society. In tough language never before heard from the Israeli left, Sarid wrote: "For the first time, Daraoushe and Mi'ari have called into question their own civic loyalties. They will pay dearly for this mistake."

Sarid's party was not happy with his intemperate rhetorical outburst. Its executive committee gathered to hear its leader, Shulamit Aloni, rebuke Sarid for the damage he caused the Movement's moral and intellectual stands. "What does that mean, 'compared to the crimes of Saddam Hussein, the sins of the government of Israel are as pure as the driven snow'?" wondered Aloni, the elder stateswoman of the Israeli left, quoting from Sarid's celebrated piece in *Ha'aretz*. "Are those our standards for morality? for humanity? Because [Saddam] is a butcher, we have the right to rule over another people? to oppress? to deport? to destroy?"

Sarid defended himself, arguing that his reaction had in fact helped maintain the credibility of the Israeli left. "Absent my response, the left would be seen as dogmatic—deaf, blind, and dumb—incapable of soul-searching or re-evaluation; an entity that molds the world to fit its point of view, rather than adapting its views to conform to reality."

Sarid's words, whether intended or not, amounted to a sweeping indictment of his colleagues on the left. Have they really been so self-indulgent as to "mold the world to fit their point of view"? Have they really failed to recognize the nature of Arab intentions, as suggested so often by their right-wing critics?

For most Israeli doves this debate is not so much about repenting past sins as about present credibility: How do you talk an essentially hawkish majority into major territorial and political concessions without appearing to be a sellout? Israeli leftists have been increasingly compromised in the eyes of those who are sometimes described as "second Israel," an equivalent, say, of blue-collar workers in Queens or Chicago. To them, the left has remained socially aloof, secluded in the Ashkenazi middle-class neighborhoods of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa; self-righteous in its eagerness to "blame Israel first," to paraphrase Jeane Kirkpatrick; intellectually patronizing in its poorly disguised contempt for the cultural traditions of North African and Middle Eastern Jews.

The left did not realize how alienated it had become from a majority of the population until the 1981 election. Ever since then it has attempted to shift its political message from the high ground of moralism to the pragmatic level of Israel's self-interest. Leftist tacticians have suggested that emphasis should no longer be put on the virtue of Palestinian self-determination (since, after all, elections are rarely won on the basis of unadulterated altruism) but rather on how perpetual occupation would be self-defeating for Israel.

In Israel being a dove requires more than marching in demonstrations or taking a political stand on op-ed pages. Given the country's small size and the almost incestuous nature of Israeli society, liberals have to confront their critics also in the supermarket, in the workplace, and even in the military reserve—a most demoralizing experience in a culture not noted for its political tolerance. Leftists have to bear the political cross of alleged "appeasement" (toward greedy Arab nationalism) and pay the social price extracted by the stigma of being labeled "Arab lovers."

One ought not to underestimate the psychological dimension. Virtual political pariahs such as Yossi Sarid may well begin to enjoy receiving fan mail extolling their patriotism instead of hate mail questioning their mother's decency. This newfound acceptance could encourage second thoughts, beyond the Persian Gulf and perhaps over much broader agendas of Israeli political culture.

If Hussein is finally routed and Palestinian extremists, who endorsed him, are dealt a severe blow, Israeli doves may feel that their message has become relevant again, and a reassured Israeli public may be willing to consider it. But if Hussein remains in power in Baghdad and radicalism in the Arab world emerges from this crisis intact, the Middle East should brace itself for a new Israel, one in which sworn doves will join the NRA, and declared hawks will be transformed into full-time vultures.

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Kissinger, the Business Forum, and Co.

THE IRAQ LOBBY

By Joe Conason

No advocate of military force in the Persian Gulf has been more widely quoted in recent weeks than Henry A. Kissinger. In op-ed articles and television appearances, he has offered his antiseptic-sounding prescription of "surgical and progressive" air strikes against Iraqi targets and has urged the destruction of the Iraqi regime. These views have been cited repeatedly by hawkish editorialists and were treated as front-page news by *The New York Times*. None of this is startling—until one considers that the former secretary of state's consulting firm, Kissinger Associates, under the auspices of a pro-Iraq interest group, was not so long ago offering economic advice to Saddam Hussein.

Of course, Henry Kissinger isn't the only American businessman who has abruptly changed his view of Iraq. Before the current crisis erupted, dozens of major U.S. and multinational corporations—nearly all of them members of a little-known trade association called the

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U.S.-Iraq Business Forum—eagerly supplied the Hussein regime with everything from rice to computers to helicopters, and anticipated that Hussein would spend billions more. But because Kissinger and his associates straddle the worlds of business and diplomacy, they offer a particularly striking example of how U.S. policy elites virtually ignored the threat to regional (and global) security and to human rights posed by Iraq until the invasion of Kuwait made that threat too obvious to overlook.

Though Kissinger now says that Hussein should be deposed because he "used poison gas against his own dissident population," that did not prevent his consulting firm—or other corporate powers—from continuing to do business in Baghdad for years after Iraq's chemical warfare capability had been unleashed against Iraqi minorities (and Iranian soldiers). If anything, Hussein was coddled by government officialdom at the urging of his U.S. business partners. The companies seeking Iraq's petrodollars arranged for U.S. taxpayers to assume the risk of doing business with Hussein through commodity credits and loan guarantees underwritten by the federal government.

Keeping these subsidies in place wasn't easy, given the nature of the Iraqi regime. Safeguarding them from congressional sanctions and the federal bureaucracy was, from 1982 until last month, the raison d'être of the U.S.-Iraq Business Forum. Based in Washington, where it worked closely with the Iraqi Embassy, over the past few years the Forum and its powerful members have quietly kept the U.S. credits and loans pouring into Baghdad. By June 1989 these efforts raised the Forum in Hussein's estimation so high that he invited a number of the group's leading members—accompanied by a representative of the legendary Dr. Kissinger—to Baghdad for a four-day program of meetings and banquets with Cabinet officials and other top members of his government, and he himself granted them a highly unusual two-hour audience.

The Forum's membership, currently more than fifty firms, has expanded as rapidly as the growth in trade between the United States and Iraq. (Annual sales grew from about $400 million in 1985 to $1.5 billion in 1989, and had been expected to double again this year.) Its board of directors includes officials of Amoco, Mobil, Westinghouse, Caterpillar, and the First City Bancorporation of Texas (whose chairman and CEO, A. Robert Abboud, also chairs the Forum). Its daily affairs in Washington are overseen by Forum president Marshall W. Wiley, a lawyer at the huge lobbying law firm of Sidley & Austin and a former U.S. ambassador to Oman. (He also ran the U.S. interest section in Baghdad before full diplomatic relations resumed in 1984.) The bland, reassuring Wiley is assisted by executive director Mary E. King, a pioneering civil rights activist who served as associate director of ACTION, the umbrella agency for the Peace Corps and its domestic offshoots, during the Carter administration.

Neither the Forum nor any of its officers or members is registered with the Justice Department as an agent for Iraq, although they have spent much of the past five years seeking to promote that nation's interests in Washington. "We're not putting out propaganda about Iraq to the general public," Wiley told me in an interview last May, while admitting that his mission of advocating more trade "does have a public relations aspect to it." He draws a fine line, arguing that the Forum doesn't lobby, leaving that task to its constituents. "We keep our members informed," he explained, "so they can then pursue their own interests as they see them."

But in fact the Forum has insistently put out a soft line on Iraq that goes well beyond Wiley's occasional appearances on TV programs like "This Week with David Brinkley," or his letters opposing sanctions that appear in *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times*. In May 1988, while Hussein was wiping out thousands of Kurdish civilians, the Forum sponsored a Washington symposium on Iraq that was wholly dominated by apologists for the regime. The keynote speakers were Nizar Hamdoon, then Iraq's ambassador to the United States, and Abdul Rahim al-Chalabi, Iraq's oil minister, and much of the discussion was given over to their country's rapid growth and the enormous market it would create for imported capital and consumer goods. A. Peter Burleigh, deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, closed his remarks by cheerfully noting that the administration looked "to those in the U.S.-Iraq Business Forum to help preserve—and expand—the overall U.S.-Iraqi relationship through its commercial side, as only the private sector can do."

Several months later Wiley prevailed upon his friends in the Reagan administration to oppose economic sanctions, which were under consideration after Hussein's use of poison gas against the Kurds was revealed. In an October 1988 letter to President Reagan on Forum stationery—which lists such corporate affiliates as Mobil, Amoco, and GM—Wiley wrote, "We fully understand and agree with your desire to limit the use of chemical weapons," but he insisted that imposing sanctions on Iraq "would have the opposite effect." Sanctions were never imposed, and have been consistently opposed, until now, by the Reagan and Bush administrations. It is worth considering the possibility that had sanctions been imposed two years ago, the present crisis might never have begun.

The Forum's pro-Iraq activities in Washington have been financed by dues of member companies, not by the Iraqi treasury. But as early as May 1985, before the Forum even opened its doors, Ambassador Hamdoon gave Wiley a letter on embassy letterhead. It bluntly advised "any United States company interested in doing business with Iraq" that it "would do well to join the Forum." Several months later the Hussein regime announced publicly that for companies wishing to do business in Iraq membership in the Forum was practically mandatory. Flanked by Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, Hamdoon told a Washington audience: "Our people in Baghdad will

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give priority—when there is competition between two companies—to the one that is a member of the Forum." A directory of Forum members was later issued to officials of every ministry in Baghdad, with instructions to use it when awarding contracts or procuring supplies.

By directing contributions to Iraq's friend in Washington, Iraq's foreign ministry took advantage of what many regard as a loophole in the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which mandates a detailed report of agent activities every six months. Because it was not registered as an official agent of the Iraqi regime, the Forum was able to operate far more freely in Washington and maintained credibility as an advocate of American interests, rather than a mouthpiece for a discredited tyranny.

The ultimate sign of appreciation for services rendered came in the spring of 1989, when the Iraqi government invited the Forum's "blue ribbon" trade delegation to Baghdad. Present in addition to Abboud, Wiley, and King were CEOs or senior executives of Amoco, Mobil, Occidental Petroleum, Westinghouse, General Motors, Xerox, Bell Helicopter Textron, and several other Fortune 500 companies. Invitations were extended only to member companies with annual sales in excess of $500 million, but an exception was made for Alan Stoga, an economist specializing in international finance and oil markets who is Kissinger's senior associate.

True to the secrecy that is his boss's obsession, Stoga has refused to discuss his visit to Baghdad, or any interests the Kissinger firm and its clients may have in Iraq. According to Wiley, Stoga "was asked to accompany us, although Kissinger Associates is not officially part of the Forum, because of his general knowledge of international finance and banking problems." At the time, as the Forum's newsletter pointed out, Iraq's massive debt was "the principal constraint" on U.S. trade, and Stoga's job was to explain how Hussein could restructure his debt and obtain loans from U.S. commercial banks and other lenders.

Private financing would have meant bigger profits, not only for financial institutions like Chase Manhattan that have long retained Kissinger, but for other Kissinger clients doing deals in Iraq. Although Kissinger Associates closely guards the identities of its clientele, the list of acknowledged clients includes several firms that have won large contracts from the Hussein regime in the past few years: Volvo, whose chairman, Pehr Gyllenhammer, sits on Kissinger's own board; Hunt Oil, which also sent an executive on the Baghdad trip; Fiat, whose subsidiary has been implicated in weapons sales to Iraq; Coca-Cola; and the Yugoslav construction giant Energoprojekt. At least one other Kissinger client, Britain's Midland Bank, is one of a small group of commercial houses already holding large amounts of Iraqi paper, so it too would have benefited from fresh loans by other lenders.

The nature and substance of the Kissinger firm's advice to its clients is another closely guarded secret. But given Kissinger's own Middle East expertise and that of many of his employees and ex-employees (notably Lawrence Eagleburger, now deputy secretary of state, and national security adviser Brent Scowcroft, a prominent pre-Kuwait advocate of cooperation with Saddam Hussein), it is reasonable to assume that the firm's advice on Iraq was sought and given.

The former secretary of state's business interests in the Middle East (and around the world) pose an ethical problem for journalists when they seek him out as the nation's most prominent foreign policy expert. When Kissinger appears in the media to comment upon the Gulf crisis, reporters and editors have refrained from questioning him about his interests in Iraq (or Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, for that matter). They made the same omission last year when he took to the airwaves to discuss China, a country where he has substantial commercial interests. In the China case the omission was more egregious, since Kissinger was defending the Chinese government and arguing that the United States should "not do any sanctions" in response to the Tiananmen Square massacre. But even though Kissinger's post-Kuwait message on Iraq was very different, it might have been worth asking him if he thought his firm's previous activities had in any way contributed to the Iraqi arrogance that produced the present crisis.

Kissinger too has declined all requests to be interviewed about the June 1989 trade delegation. Explaining its activities has been left to Wiley. "Iraq plays an important role now in bringing about stability in the Gulf region as an offset to Iran," Wiley told me after the Baghdad visit. "This balance of power is important to us because of our interest further down the Gulf in the countries that are friendly to us and where we have substantial energy reserves that must be protected. So Iraq plays an important political and geopolitical role in addition to being an important trading partner for us, and we can't push all these considerations to the side and shut our eyes to them because of some perceived human rights violations." Wiley added piously: "We should work with the Iraqi government to try to improve their human rights behavior, in whatever ways we can. [But] we will not achieve that if we cut off our ties with Iraq."

That view prevailed in the State Department until Hussein invaded Kuwait, although other Mideast experts disagreed. In a 200-page report on Iraq issued last February, the human rights group Middle East Watch exhaustively documented Iraq's record of brutality. It recommended that the United States terminate all credits and loans to Baghdad—effectively ending most trade—"until such time as the Iraqi government dramatically curbs abuses." Many of the same media outlets now decrying Hussein's atrocities and repression ignored the Middle East Watch report when it was published.

And almost no one noticed the report's footnote about the June 1989 trade delegation, which mentioned Kissinger Associates. There was a touch of morbid irony in the fact that Stoga arrived in Baghdad on June 4—the day Kissinger's old friends in Beijing sent the tanks into Tiananmen Square. Meanwhile, the U.S.-Iraq Busi-

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ness Forum is effectively out of business. But when the crisis recedes, no matter what tyrant rules in Baghdad, it seems safe to predict that Marshall Wiley and his corporate allies will be back, insisting that it is in our interest to help them make money.

JOE CONASON is editor-at-large of *Details* magazine.

America's obscenity test lacks serious value.

'MILLER' TIME

By Jeff Rosen

This fall a Cincinnati curator is facing a federal judge for having displayed the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe. Luther Cambell of 2 Live Crew will appeal his Florida conviction for having produced *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*. And Karen Finley may challenge her grant denial from the National Endowment for the Arts. All three will use the Supreme Court's obscenity test to defend their work as "serious" art. But in a perverse betrayal of its purpose, the Supreme Court's test, properly applied, may threaten naughty artists more than it protects them.

When the test was announced in *Miller* v. *California* in 1973, it promised to distinguish art from obscenity by protecting sexually explicit work that had "serious" artistic value. (The more lenient previous test said obscenity had to be "utterly without redeeming social value.") But over the years, art has become more sexually explicit, the line between high art and low has been increasingly blurred, and artists have come to question the idea of artistic "seriousness." Now the *Miller* test measures art by a standard that many artists are unwilling to meet and that jurors are unable to identify. For different reasons, unlikely allies such as William Brennan, Antonin Scalia, and movie czar Jack Valenti agree that it's time to take aesthetic decisions out of the courtrooms.

In *Miller* the Court said that judges and juries should ask themselves three questions when attempting to distinguish between art and obscenity: first, "whether 'the average person, applying contemporary community standards' would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest"; second, "whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law"; and, third, "whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value." If the answer to all three questions is yes, then the work can be banned; if not, then the work must be protected.

From the moment it was conceived, the test seemed ambiguous. "To be prurient and offensive, a work has to turn you on and gross you out at the same time," says Kathleen Sullivan of Harvard Law School. But during the 1980s the ambiguous test became unintelligible as changes in art and law eliminated "serious" artistic value as a viable distinction between art and obscenity. First, artistic goals changed. As Amy Adler argues in a student note in a recent issue of *The Yale Law Journal*, postmodernism rebelled against the modernist demand that art should be "serious," or that it should have any traditional "value" at all. "Bad" painters like David Salle juxtaposed images from art history and pornography. Sculptors like Jeff Koons created what *New York Times* critic Michael Brenson called "art that looks like trash and trashes high art," including a porcelain bust of Italian porn star Cicciolina. And rappers like 2 Live Crew mixed scatology with Muddy Waters. As a result, the *Miller* test has come to evaluate postmodern art by the very standard that postmodern art seeks to defy.

Second, the *Miller* test itself changed. Three years ago, in *Pope* v. *Illinois*, the Supreme Court decided that courts should ask whether a "reasonable person" would find serious value in the suspect art. It is hard to imagine a more philistine and less appropriate test for artistic value than the aesthetic sensibility of the "reasonable person." Reasonable people attacked Manet's *Déjeuner Sur L'Herbe* and Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" as indecent. And reasonable people are even less likely to find serious value in artists like Mapplethorpe and Finley, who go out of their way to offend reasonable tastes. When the "reasonable person" standard was announced, liberals like Brennan cringed at the bewildering union of law and aesthetics. But they were joined by the conservative Scalia, who is wary of judicial subjectivity wherever it occurs. "[I]t is quite impossible," wrote Scalia, "to come to an objective assessment of (at least) literary or artistic value. . . . Since ratiocination has little to do with esthetics, the fabled 'reasonable man' is of little help in the inquiry. . . . For the law courts to decide 'What is Beauty' is a novelty even by today's standards."

The changes in art and law left artists vulnerable to prosecution when local authorities decided to crack down in 1990. As a result, the artists who face federal judges this fall have no way of predicting with confidence whether they have broken the law. To appreciate their predicament, pretend you are a juror at an obscenity trial and try to apply the *Miller* test to the work of Mapplethorpe, 2 Live Crew, and Finley.

Start with Mapplethorpe's photograph of the man with the bullwhip up his ass. Would an average person in your community find that it appeals to the prurient interest? The Supreme Court complicates matters by defining "prurient" not only as "material having a tendency to excite lustful thoughts," but also as material that shows a "shameful or morbid interest in nudity, sex, or excretion." An expert witness may be helpful. "The male genitals are often presented . . . as surrogates for the face," writes the poet Richard Howard in a tribute to Mapplethorpe. Sounds like an interest in

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nudity, which might even be shameful, depending on what your neighbors are used to. Is the simulation of sodomy patently offensive? Again, your community is the judge. As for the third criterion, wouldn't someone like Dennis Barrie, the director of the Contemporary Arts Center of Cincinnati, know "serious" artistic value when he sees it? Other art experts, though, doubt Mapplethorpe's seriousness. Robert Hughes calls Mapplethorpe an "overrated photographer." And Hilton Kramer of *The New Criterion* detects no serious artistic value. "Are these disputed pictures works of art?" Kramer asks. "Alas, I suppose they are," but they do not "belong to the highest levels of art." Who is a more reasonable person, Barrie or Kramer? Would a reasonable person find either of them reasonable?

Now try the same exercise with 2 Live Crew. Assume, as Judge Jose A. Gonzalez did, that *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* appeals to lustful thoughts (it doesn't; it's boring), and that it is patently offensive in some parts of Florida (Gonzalez justified his knowledge of community standards by noting that he had "attended public functions and events" throughout the community). Scholars and journalists have been properly ridiculed for defending 2 Live Crew by exaggerating their artistic, literary, even scientific seriousness. (See "Too Cruel, Live," TNR, July 9 & 16.) But the legal test requires no less, refusing to protect pop culture unless it masquerades as high culture.

It is hard to conclude, as Gonzalez did (using the wrong test), that *Nasty* is "utterly without any redeeming social value." You don't have to compare the rappers' braggadocio in the call and response form to duets from Wagner's Siegfried ("The boy is fearless and his sword is sharp") to recognize that boasting about sex in rhyme is part of the black oral tradition. If dirty rap can be banned, suggests Bruce Jackson, an English professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo, then so can hundreds of equally filthy verses dating back to the nineteenth century. And a quick skim of his anthology of black narrative poetry, *Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me*, proves the point.

But if a nineteenth-century pedigree suggests that scatology in rhyme may have *some* literary or artistic value, how is anyone, reasonable or not, to decide whether the value is "serious"? In a relativistic age, that is a judgment that even the defenders of rap are reluctant to make. To complicate matters, black culture, from novels to jazz, has long rejected the distinction between popular art and serious art. Gonzalez's analysis is embarrassing ("Obscenity? Yes!" his opinion shrieked), but 2 Live Crew leaves the *Miller* test at a loss.

Finally, consider a performance artist like Finley, whose angry, scatological feminism is intended to be *anti*-pornographic. "If a woman can't talk about rape or sexual violence in the language she was abused in," Finley said in 1988, "it's against our First Amendment rights." But it may not be if our First Amendment rights are defined by *Miller*. Prurient interest? Finley says, "There's nothing sexually exciting about my work"; but remember that prurient also means "a shameful or morbid interest in nudity, sex, or excretion." That, suggests Adler, sounds like an apt description of Finley's oeuvre, as she smears food into her genitals, defecates onstage, and describes graphic sex acts with priests and the handicapped. Patently offensive? That's Finley's goal. Which leaves "serious artistic value" as the only way of distinguishing Finley from the pornography she abhors. But performance art was designed to mock the idea of artistic seriousness. "This is work that sends up the notion of art taking itself seriously," says Barbara Tsumagari, executive director of the Kitchen, a performance space in New York where Finley has performed. Does that effort itself have serious artistic value? "It's a very postmodern question. We need a postmodern test," says Tsumagari.

Until we get one, sexually explicit artists will continue to be suppressed. But that can't be constitutional if the First Amendment protects self-expression regardless of its political value, as the Supreme Court has repeatedly held. In other words, if art can't be cleanly distinguished from obscenity, as more than thirty years of failed Supreme Court tests make clear, then private consumption of obscenity must be endured so that art can be protected.

Justices Brennan and Scalia, who rarely agreed on anything, have said that the *Miller* test should be reconsidered, although they disagree about appropriate alternatives. In a little noticed concurrence last January, Scalia suggested that courts should focus on the intention of the distributors, rather than on the intention of the creators, of sexually explicit material. He would prohibit communities from suppressing particular books or films, but would allow them to close down adult bookstores and theaters that specialize in pandering sex for profit. Scalia's solution has the clear advantage of taking the courts out of aesthetics and guaranteeing that individual works of literature or art (or pornography for that matter) could never be banned in America again. At the same time, Scalia would allow communities to reduce access to soft-core porn, which is constitutionally protected, as well as hard-core porn, which is not. But Mapplethorpe, Cambell, and Finley would be safe.

Justice Brennan's alternative—no obscenity test at all—fell one vote short of a Supreme Court majority in 1973 and is likely to fall shorter today. But it remains the solution of choice for First Amendment absolutists, and it would allow communities to focus their attention on the problem at hand: keeping sexually explicit material away from children and unwilling adults in an increasingly explicit age. Until the *Miller* test exposed itself this year, the most important pornography cases over the past two decades concerned zoning regulations rather than aesthetic decisions. In 1976, and again in 1986, the Supreme Court gave local communities broad discretion to concentrate red light districts or to disperse them in the interest of preserving the "quality of urban life." Liberals like Brennan dissented from the

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zoning decisions, criticizing them as speech discrimination masquerading as urban renewal. But zoning regulations would seem much less threatening if the states were denied the draconian power to ban obscenity entirely.

In addition to zoning regulations, voluntary self-regulation of movies and records can reduce the need for state regulation. And the recent efforts of Jack Valenti for the Motion Picture Association and Tipper Gore for the Parents' Music Resource Center on behalf of voluntary warning labels have been in precisely the right direction. Valenti has resisted calls for an "A" rating between R and X to distinguish sexually explicit "art" films from soft-core porn. The purpose of ratings, he says, is to warn parents, not to identify art. And he recognizes that ratings boards are no more qualified than judges to specify the mystic point at which an "artistic" portrayal of cannibalism, for example, becomes, for some, obscene.

As for explicit records, 2 Live Crew vindicates Gore as a civil libertarian and a prophet as well. In 1985 she predicted that if liberals didn't embrace voluntary warning labels, "extremists" would resort to bans, which she opposes unequivocally. And her efforts on behalf of voluntary labels helped to pre-empt legislation requiring labels in twenty-two states.

Reversing *Miller* would also focus the debate over congressional subsidies on aesthetics rather than law. The current debate over reauthorizing the NEA is harping obsessively on the *Miller* test: liberals, having accepted some legal restrictions as inevitable, want to limit them to the language of *Miller*; conservatives want broader restrictions. "I think there is an enormous irony that the artistic community is embracing *Miller* so ardently today," says Floyd Abrams, who is representing the New School in its challenge to NEA chairman John Frohnmayer's loyalty oaths.

The legalistic squabbles, suggests Michael McConnell of Chicago Law School, obscure the distinction between criminalization and refusal to fund. When the NEA is saddled with congressional restrictions, a sensible grant refusal can look like an obscenity charge. By legislating aesthetics, and making heroes out of refuseniks, Congress reduces, rather than enhances, the Endowment's ability to discriminate on the basis of artistic merit. Even if the *Miller* test is not overturned, an NEA reauthorized without *Miller*'s restrictions would have a freer hand to reject art that lacked "serious" value. And artistic value is a more appropriate test for public subsidy than for criminal punishment.

Abandoning *Miller*, finally, would protect our judges from the scourge of pornography. There has been something sordid over the past thirty years about Supreme Court justices peering at skin flicks in the dark basement of the Court. (Justice Harlan, almost blind, asked his clerks to narrate as the action unfolded.) David Souter seems like an ascetic and upright man. For his own sake, he should join Scalia, persuade the liberals, and remove aesthetics from the courts. •

What a bill of rights would do for South Africa.

CONSTITUTIONAL CURE

By Jacob Weisberg

Now that the initial excitement of face-to-face meetings between F. W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela has worn off, prospects for an equitable settlement in South Africa appear only slightly less remote than ever. The National Party and the ANC remain miles apart on what the country's political architecture should look like. De Klerk's irreducible best offer is a racially based system of power-sharing, which will leave preponderant power over the military, police, education, and the economy in the hands of the white minority. Mandela is equally adamant that anything short of a non-racial, one-person, one-vote parliamentary democracy, in a unitary state, will be unacceptable to blacks. And the two leaders are far from confronting such basic issues. New obstacles to dialogue arise almost as quickly as old ones are cleared away in the continuing "talks about talks."

At best, South Africans can look forward to years of protracted negotiations leading to a compromise that no one has yet been able to describe, and that extremists on both sides will accept only as a call to arms. The atmosphere of the meetings has been soured by the grisly events of recent weeks: shootings of demonstrators by police, murderous attacks on bystanders by white vigilantes, and the intensification of the ANC-Inkatha conflict in Natal and in numerous black townships. At any moment talks may break down completely, bringing violence on an even more horrifying scale and reversing all that has been achieved.

There is a far more promising avenue for South Africa. De Klerk should forget about negotiations, propose a new liberal constitution, announce a national referendum to ratify it, and then proceed directly to the country's first democratic election. Before this can happen, however, the state president has to be disabused of his affection for power-sharing arrangements based on "group rights." His system would give blacks a vote but make a white person's vote more valuable than a black's. It would have as its unstated purpose the preservation of racial privilege in South Africa. There is no doubt that de Klerk wants to see apartheid drastically reformed. But like Mikhail Gorbachev, whose political development has followed a remarkably similar course, he has yet to concede that old ways will have to be abandoned entirely.

Statements by Minister for Constitutional Development Gerrit Viljoen have left only a murky picture of the political structure the National Party wants to re-

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place the current one. What can be gleaned is this: instead of the unitary parliamentary models of England, France, or Germany, which the ANC would prefer, the Nationalists like the federal systems of Switzerland and the United States. The reason is clear—these structures check majoritarianism. Both Switzerland and the United States give some individuals a bigger voice than others through one chamber of a bicameral legislature. In these schemes, the lower house is based on a principle of proportionality, while the upper is based on something else. In Switzerland and America, the something else is geography. De Klerk wants the something else to be race.

Checks on absolute majority rule—as on other kinds of absolute rule—are in no way intrinsically or morally objectionable. (See "Minority Rules," TRB, May 28.) Nor is the federal principle of devolving some power to geographic regions, which the ANC peremptorily rules out. Our own political structure is deemed truly democratic, even though the vote of each and every person does not count equally. Most Americans agree that the disproportionate Senate has served as an effective mechanism for containing populist enthusiasms; its bias in favor of rural interests is a small price to pay for its historical success in containing regional animosities. New Yorkers do not, for the most part, bristle at the thought that their Senate votes are worth less than those of Rhode Islanders. If they do, they can always move. But a system whose disproportionality is based on a fixed factor such as race or religion, and that intentionally discriminates in favor of one group and against others, is categorically different, and is intrinsically and morally objectionable. Here the comparison de Klerk likes to draw between our actual system and his putative one breaks down.

Does de Klerk expect South African blacks to be satisfied with a vote half as valuable as that given to whites? Granting them less than an equal vote would justify the continuation of revolution-making. De Klerk's form of power-sharing would require the perpetuation of the apartheid system of racial classification. Representation based on race means registering voters as black, white, Coloured, or Asian. Otherwise, nothing will stop people from voting as whatever race they want.

In practice, this means keeping some version of the despised Population Registration Act of 1950. In attempting to preserve this and other vestiges of apartheid, and to retain powers they will ultimately lose anyway, whites are likely to derail the process of peaceful change and provoke a more violent method of accommodation than the one they are presently embarked upon. Blacks, who now voice surprisingly little racial hatred or desire for retaliation after forty-two years of apartheid, may lose patience if de Klerk's party does not soon demonstrate a greater interest in granting them equal political rights.

MANDELA AND DE KLERK BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Paradoxically, the attempt to create explicit "group rights" may undermine the very group de Klerk hopes to protect: whites. Experience shows that constitutions predicated on racial or religious animosities tend to exacerbate them. Constitutions like our own, which disregard those differences, tend to diminish them over time. Lebanon had a constitution based on the division of spoils between religious factions. It worked for a few decades, but its reasonableness didn't protect minorities once trust between them evaporated and chaos became the law of the land. Cyprus is a similar story. In Zimbabwe the attempt by whites to delay settlement, then to preserve unequal power, led to a protracted civil war, and ultimately to the one-party tyranny of Robert Mugabe—though blacks, not whites, have been the regime's primary victims.

The alternative to de Klerk's scheme is a simple one. A growing number of South Africans are talking about a solution that would satisfy the demands and aspirations of blacks while protecting the interests of South Africa's racial minorities—whites, Coloureds, and Indians—far more effectively during and after the transition to majority rule. At the heart of the plan is a new, non-racial constitution that includes a universal franchise based

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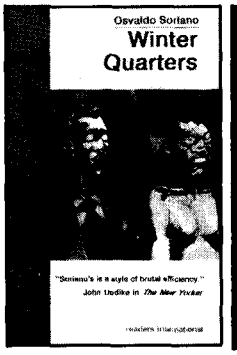

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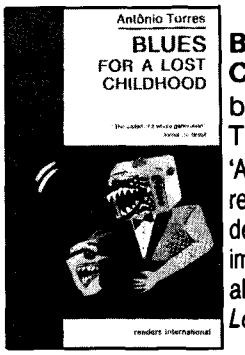

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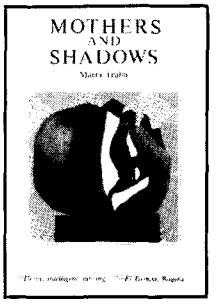

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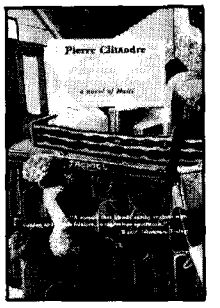

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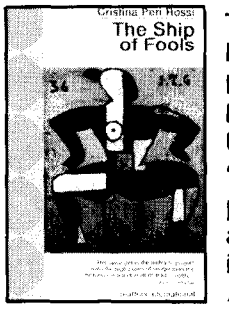

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on an equal vote for all, a strong bill of rights that limits the power of the state over individuals, and an independent judiciary with the power to enforce those rights.

An immediate constitutional cure in South Africa would have a number of salutary effects. Most important, it would cement the good faith that has begun to exist between blacks and whites. By bowing out gracefully, the Nationalists would deflate black hostility and encourage reciprocal magnanimity on questions of concern to them, such as whether to nationalize heavy industry. By deploying an equitable body of laws, de Klerk would instantaneously delegitimize revolutionary violence. His act would separate the majority in the anti-apartheid movement who truly desire equality before the law—the stated goal of ANC policy—from the minority who use "democracy" as a screen for their aspirations to authoritarian power. Dennis Beckett, editor of the liberal monthly *Frontline* and a prominent constitutional advocate, points out that such a move by de Klerk would also remove all impediments to the elimination of sanctions, boosting his country's sagging economy and spurring the process of post-apartheid nation-building.

From de Klerk's point of view, liberal constitutionalism would afford better protection for Afrikaners over the long term than power-sharing with the ANC. Unfortunately, many Afrikaners think that de Klerk has already gone too far in freeing Mandela and discussing the sharing of power with blacks. They should take heart from the example of Namibia, where a bill of rights and open elections provided reassurance for a worried white minority while satisfying the long-denied aspirations of blacks. It's too early to pass judgment on the long-term viability of Namibia's new constitutional order, but legal and democratic processes provided the framework for resolving what once looked like a hopeless ethnic and racial conflict in that country.

If de Klerk overcomes opposition within his own tribe and promulgates a new constitution, it should contain a bill of rights with the strongest protections for minorities. A 500-page working paper released last year by the South African Law Commission, a body appointed by the government to make recommendations for constitutional reform and headed by Judge Pierre Olivier, argues that a strong bill of individual rights is not only the best way to safeguard the interests of minority groups, but the only practical way. The group rights that Afrikaners are legitimately worried about defending, such as educating their children in Afrikaans, are best safeguarded by affording the same protection to every individual, regardless of race or language.

After extensive study of legal protections for human rights around the world, the commission worked out a careful, thirty-three-article model, which guarantees not only freedom of speech, assembly, movement, privacy, and due process, but the right to own and acquire private property, as our own Constitution nearly did two centuries ago. Of course, a bill of rights is worth little without a government and populace that affirms it, but much can be done to entrench its basic provisions. The report wisely recommends requiring a supermajority of three-fourths to abridge or repeal any of them. The idea of judicial testing is essential to the plan. Independent courts, not the legislature, must be the final arbiter of constitutionality.

Though the commission draft echoes many of the ANC's stated policies, the organization has not greeted it warmly. Albie Sachs of the ANC's constitutional and legal department objects that the draft was drawn up by white males appointed by the government, and claims it fails to recognize social and economic rights such as employment and housing. This is a legitimate disagreement, though the commission makes a persuasive case for following Western constitutions like our own that do not recognize so-called second-generation rights. The more cynical explanation for the ANC's ambivalence is that instituting a constitution and holding democratic elections would make the organization's coming to power less certain. No one knows for sure what level of support the ANC commands because it has never been measured at the polls. In a country where people are still imprisoned, tortured, and hacked to death for expressing dissenting opinions, you cannot find out what people think until you take a secret ballot.

An election would surely show that South Africa's 27 million blacks are far more divided than the world has been led to believe by ANC public relations. Free to choose, many blacks would vote for radical parties, the Pan-Africanist Congress and AZAPO. Inkatha has widespread support among the country's 5 million Zulus. And many blacks, as well as Indians and Afrikaans-speaking Coloureds, would vote for the existing white parliamentary parties as well: the liberal Democratic Party and even the National Party if it were integrated, as de Klerk recently proposed. (De Klerk was greeted warmly last week when he paid a visit to Soweto.) The result of an open election might well be a coalition government between white- and black-dominated parties. Whites' worst fears—retribution and expropriation—will not be realized in any case.

Even if the ANC were to win the election hands down, the government that resulted would be vastly preferable to an ANC government that negotiated its way into power. Competing for votes in a genuinely pluralist political system would be a healthy, chastening experience for the organization. An election would help the ANC, which now conceives of itself largely as a government-in-exile, make the conceptual leap to thinking of itself as one political party out of many in a multiparty structure. A first, fair, democratic exercise makes it more likely that a second and a third will follow in orderly fashion. Above all, a constitutional order ensures that the ANC, the Nationalists, or whichever party wins, can be voted out if it abuses power.

The international community, encouraged by the release of Mandela and the National Party's willingness to move finally in the right direction, has been quick to accept the idea of negotiations. Democracies of the

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world should be more skeptical, however, about the concept of power-sharing, and more insistent on real democracy as the only workable compromise for South Africa. This should be President Bush's message for de Klerk when he visits Washington in October. Dennis Beckett draws a useful comparison to Eastern Europe. In Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, members of the opposition never argued that negotiations between Communists and non-Communists leading to a power-sharing arrangement would be a satisfactory solution. Non-Communists demanded elections in which they would compete openly for votes with Communists.

Those elections have taken place, with the result that the Communists are looking for work and the formerly banned leaders of the opposition are now in charge. The majority of South Africans are no less eager to elect representatives democratically and to govern themselves. There's no excuse for denying them the right. •

De Klerk and Mandela, tyrants together?

THE AUTHORITARIAN CENTER

By Sanford J. Ungar

CAPE TOWN

Louis Pienaar has a problem. He only recently returned from Namibia, where, as South Africa's last administrator-general, he turned the territory over to a black-majority government. Now he has been appointed chairman of the Publications Appeal Board. He has considerable authority over what his fellow countrymen may see and read—and what will be judged obscene, indecent, offensive to public morals, or dangerous to the state. With standards changing so quickly, it is difficult to decide what to allow and what to control. Pienaar is comfortable enough choosing which sex scenes must be cut from certain movies, or what warnings to require on the posters for Rambo films (he is inclined to be strict), but he finds the political judgments perplexing. "Consider the books relating to communism, for example. They used to be banned or restricted to the university libraries." Sitting in the living room of his modern home in an all-white Afrikaner suburb of Cape Town, he speaks slowly, translating his thoughts clumsily into English. He almost chokes over the term "freedom fighters," the rebels whose books and pamphlets have been prohibited for decades. "But the state now says we can negotiate with these people . . . so we have to let the public read what they say." Only a few days before our conversation, in fact, the board had reviewed a strident treatise on "the armed struggle" in South Africa, published by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). "It was mere rhetoric," says Pienaar with a trace of self-amusement. "We let it go."

Pienaar is just one of the countless South Africans from across the political spectrum who are setting about the dizzying process of building what is officially known as "the new South Africa," which is scheduled to come into being no later than September 1994 (when the mandate of the current all-white Parliament expires). On an upper story of a fancy office building in the center of Johannesburg, just down the hall from the Insurance Institute of South Africa, members of the "education department" of the African National Congress, most of them in exile or on the run until six months ago, calculate how to spread their message more widely. They tie up an entire elevator with copies of their latest publications.

Then there is Andrew Boraine, former president of the white liberal National Union of South African Students and one of the founders of the multiracial United Democratic Front. The last time I saw him inside South Africa, seven-and-a-half years ago, he was banned, forbidden to be with more than one person at a time, and could not be legally quoted in his country. He was cautious on the telephone and inhibited in public, so the only place it seemed safe to talk together about political issues was in a parked car in the rain. Today Boraine laughs at that memory. He works openly with PLANACT, an organization that helps black groups in small communities to challenge government regulations. He and his fiancée are members of their neighborhood ANC branch, and—perhaps the most amazing change—they have an answering machine at home.

"This is our Prague Spring. Freedom of expression is now at its peak in the country's history," says David Dison, a Johannesburg lawyer active in the fight for greater press freedom in South Africa. "But we will have to move quickly to establish a bill of rights and preserve it." That is the underlying theme of virtually every con-

SANFORD J. UNGAR, dean of the School of Communication at American University, is the author of *Africa: The People and Politics of an Emerging Continent* (Touchstone, Simon & Schuster).

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versation a current visitor to South Africa is likely to have—that these are exciting but dangerous and unpredictable times. The euphoria is tempered with a sense of foreboding. "The old book is closed, that is certain," one newspaper editor says in describing the aftermath of the decision last February by President F. W. de Klerk to release Nelson Mandela from prison, legalize the ANC and other opposition groups, and begin negotiations to develop a political system that will allow participation by blacks at the national level for the first time. "The trouble is, no one has any idea what is in the new book."

One obvious danger is the widespread violence, which, appropriately enough, comes in black and white varieties. First in Natal, and more recently in black townships in every region, young, hot-headed supporters of the ANC and of Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha movement have gone after each other with a deadly vengeance. At Mpumalanga, a township north of Durban that has been at the center of the conflict, scorched hillsides and empty, abandoned, roofless houses are evidence of the take-no-prisoners attitude of those who do battle. "I am convinced that many of these kids don't really know why they're fighting," says one Western diplomat who has closely followed the Natal clashes. "But it has reached the point where almost every [black] family in Natal thinks it knows who killed one of its children and wants revenge."

Less well publicized or understood outside South Africa is the violence perpetrated by the extreme right wing, mostly Afrikaners who feel that de Klerk and his National Party have abandoned the *volk* and sold out to communism. They are heavily armed—there are probably more weapons per capita in private hands in South Africa than in any other country in the world—and in recent months the Afrikaner Resistance Movement and some of its more violent offshoots have claimed credit for bombings at the homes or offices of Cabinet members and Johannesburg city councilors; at opposition newspapers; at Jewish institutions; and at bus stops frequented by black commuters.

The radical right has its own folk hero, one Piet "Skiet" Rudolph, a high-tech fugitive who sends violent threats by fax and distributes videotapes of his fulminations against the government. And it has a political leader, Andries Treurnicht, head of the Conservative Party, the official opposition in Parliament, who stands ready to take over and turn the clock back if de Klerk should fail in his negotiating effort. (Even de Klerk's staunchest supporters concede that he cannot risk another all-white election, because he would surely lose. Some of the government's own soundings indicate that if things go poorly over the next year, he may find himself with as little as 35 percent support among white voters.) The great unknown is the police and the military, which have had extralegal death squads operating from within their ranks for years. Thousands of disgruntled policemen and soldiers may be available to participate in a right-wing coup, if they become convinced that is the only way to achieve a radical rollback of the recent reforms in apartheid.

But there is another danger entirely, more subtle and potentially just as serious as the violence—that the dialogue on South Africa's future will be a charade and relatively few people will have an opportunity to participate in it. If that is the case, the new South Africa may be barely distinguishable from the old. On the surface the process is characterized by great ferment: government officials have reportedly computerized all the world's constitutions, in a search for innovative ways to protect minority rights and solve other difficult problems. And there are many significant areas of public disagreement between the current rulers and the ruled. One of these is whether a constituent assembly should first be elected, on the basis of one person, one vote, to write a new constitution; another is how the economy of the future South Africa should be organized and managed. The whole endeavor was nearly suspended in late July, when the police found computer disks that supposedly held contingency plans for a takeover by the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation).

Yet after two weeks of traveling around the country, talking with a broad range of public officials, journalists, scholars, and private citizens of all races, I am convinced that for all the public posturing and nasty rhetoric, the basic deal has already been cut—that the National Party and the ANC are effectively becoming a ruling coalition and only the details of their historic bargain remain to be worked out. Indeed, the latest violence that has swept across South Africa is probably a byproduct of the closed negotiating process.

Even before the ground rules of the full-scale negotiations have been formally established, the white establishment press carries a minor, sometimes cryptic report every few days about informal, specialized talks between representatives of the government and the ANC. Few details are provided, but the rumor mill is full of stories about how well Chris Hani, the chief of Umkhonto, gets along with his new friends in the South African Defence Force; intelligence operatives who spent years plotting against each other are said to be having a great time comparing notes. A high-ranking official of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which was a major vehicle for black political action while the ANC was still banned, told me of attending a private meeting at which Mandela praised de Klerk as a man uniquely worthy of trust. A Cabinet minister close to de Klerk spoke of Mandela in an interview as "a remarkable man who should not be underestimated."

De Klerk and Mandela, of course, need each other desperately. Each recognizes that the cost of winning an armed struggle against the other's forces is prohibitive, and neither one sees himself as having any viable alternative negotiating partners. De Klerk's other options are grim indeed: although the government spent years building up Buthelezi (and he returned the favor by

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publicly opposing economic sanctions and disinvestment), he is now regarded as vain and irresponsible, a has-been who is becoming less popular among the Zulus and has little hope of attracting the loyalty of any other ethnic group except English-speaking whites. The PAC has no well-known national figures among its leadership, and in any event it opposes negotiations before the white regime has stepped down. Various black-consciousness organizations are growing in membership, but they are even less well organized than the ANC. Ever since Mandela's release, Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu has stepped out of the limelight, and Allan Boesak, a former religious and political leader among the so-called Coloureds, has been discredited by scandals involving his extramarital affairs with white women.

Mandela truly has no place else to go. There is little value in a close relationship with the Democratic Party and other white liberal groups; they are more useful to him as a progressive influence on the government's side. The far right has been implicated in plots to assassinate Mandela (along with de Klerk), and the Conservative Party, if it came to power, would almost surely find a way to put him back in prison. Any illusions of an alliance between Mandela and other black leaders like Buthelezi have been dispelled by the recent fighting; in more than seven months the two still have not managed to meet face to face.

Although the ANC accuses the government of favoring Inkatha—and this may be true of the police—the National Party treats the ANC more and more as its junior partner in power. Some of the legendary ideological differences between the government and the ANC have little meaning in reality. For all the uproar over the threat of nationalization, for example, both sides recognize that South Africa already has one of the most highly centralized economies in the world. Since 1948, when the National Party came to power, a vast number of state enterprises have been created, in many cases with the express purpose of giving Afrikaners greater access to the job market and other economic levers traditionally controlled by English-speaking whites. There is no competition for defense contracts, because the manufacture of arms is concentrated in a state monopoly. A national banana marketing board has been used to drive Indian farmers out of that business, and citrus fruit is handled by another bureaucracy. The wine growers in the Cape province benefit from membership in a tightly organized, state-sponsored cooperative. So whereas the whites, particularly Afrikaners, have been protected for more than four decades by an elaborate socialist economic system operated by a huge civil service, the blacks have been left to fend for themselves under the strictest of capitalist rules.

Under the circumstances, some economic adjustments can be anticipated. There will be irresistible pressure to redistribute some of the land, 87 percent of which is now legally reserved for the white minority. And with ten corporate conglomerates controlling some 90 percent of the companies listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange, it would not be surprising if the new South Africa took an interest in good old American-style antitrust legislation. But notwithstanding the doctrinaire language of the 1954 Freedom Charter (and the stridency of the ANC's and the South African Communist Party's economic theorists) on this point, the pragmatic Mandela of today understands the decline of communism in Europe. He seems unlikely to press for a takeover of the mines and the banks. He is already making his peace with the South African business community.

That is just the point: after more than a quarter century in prison, Mandela emerges in his seventies as the government's kind of practical politician, not attracted to radical solutions for complicated problems. And de Klerk has cleverly co-opted Mandela into the process of figuring out what to do. Before long, it will be not only the National Party's problem that there are 7 million people in South Africa with no permanent housing and 23 million without electricity; it will also be Mandela's, or the ANC's. In a new political system the ANC will have to deal with the fact that tens of thousands of black children have effectively missed several years of school because of protests, and with the resulting decline in the country's literacy rate. Whether this spreading of responsibility produces any more innovative solutions remains to be seen, but de Klerk and his colleagues are banking on the hope that a share of power will make the former black opposition more moderate and reasonable. (By trying to recruit blacks to join the National Party itself, he hopes to broaden his base even further.) "It's a big gamble," concedes Stoffel van der Merwe, a former diplomat and academic who is now minister of education and training in de Klerk's Cabinet and a member of his negotiating team. "But South African history has been full of gambles. The Great Trek [when the Boer farmers moved inland from the Cape in the 1830s and defeated the Zulus in the Battle of Blood River] was a hell of a gamble."

But South African history is also full of authoritarianism, on all sides. There is a serious risk that the National Party and the ANC, ruling the country together with what begins as an overwhelming numerical majority of support, will find it more tempting to resort to repression than would either one separately—especially if Mandela begins to feel more genuinely threatened by the comrades on his left (not to mention Inkatha) and de Klerk by the fascists on his right. In order to hold the center, it may seem attractive to reinstitute a national state of emergency and press restrictions (if not to take over the press entirely, as some forces in the ANC already advocate), and to detain or ban political opponents in the name of state security. Then, as many impoverished blacks discover that the release of Mandela did not transform their lives after all, and many more whites come to resent what they have permanently lost, the real bloodbath may begin. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Fine Italian Hands

Maurizio Nichetti is one more of the foreign filmmakers now at work who are celebrated abroad and are virtually unknown in this country. Born in Milan in 1948, he began writing, directing, and acting in films in 1979 and won a high reputation with three comedies. Like his compatriot, Nanni Moretti, who is five years younger, Nichetti is a valued artist in many countries other than the United States, where he has never been shown publicly. At last, with **The Icicle Thief** (Aries), we get our chance.

Nichetti first studied architecture, then worked at the Piccolo Teatro of Milan, run by that genius, Giorgio Strehler. With his training there, he moved on to perform for a time as a circus clown and acrobat. For eight years he wrote scripts for Bruno Bozzetto, the superb animator. (Nichetti knows how to choose mentors.) Then he made his first feature, a nearly silent comedy in which he played the leading role of a waiter, and followed it with two more comedies in which he established himself as the bushy-haired, bushy-mustached character, with his own name, who is again on hand in *The Icicle Thief*. (I've seen none of his previous work.) Nichetti has also been active in Italian TV where, among other shows, he created a successful children's program that was played in a language he devised.

In *The Icicle Thief* he has two roles, the established one, as himself with mustache, and a clean-shaven one as the poor, unemployed worker-hero of a film within the film. It opens with Nichetti visiting a TV studio where he is to be interviewed by a TV film critic before a showing of his new film, *The Icicle Thief*. After a mix-up in the studio (some digs at Italian TV operation), they start to show his film, which is set in postwar Italy around 1950 and is in a black-and-white neorealist vein. This film takes over the screen we are watching. But TV keeps interrupting with commercials in lush color, which drive Nichetti mad. Us, too. Just as we are caught up in the troubles of a worker and his family, a Superman type—in color—comes sailing in to sell detergent or a bunch of overfed kids start to munch candy bars. And all this is counterpointed with still another visual strand, a present-day plump middle-class family in its living room, watching both the black-and-white film and the commercials.

Before long, the interruptions become so frequent that the worker's wife, who has modest ambitions as a singer, gets jolted out of *her* film into the middle of a singing commercial, which she likes, and a gorgeous tall blond model in a skimpy bathing suit, whom we see in a commercial, dives into a luxe swimming pool and floats down a river into the black-and-white picture. The worker rescues her. (A particularly clever moment: as he dries her off, he rubs her from color into black and white.)

So there he is, with his wife off in modern singing commercials, with this bathing beauty in his home taking care of his little boy, while he tries to straighten things out—and while the original ending of Nichetti's neorealist film is being wrecked by the infiltration of the TV environment. At the end, TV takes its peculiar revenge on director-actor Nichetti.

The satire of commercials themselves and of the way they are used to sunder films is easy to do: Nichetti just had to mimic what actually happens. (In early August the Italian Parliament passed a law limiting commercial breaks on public and private TV; it's less restrictive than in other countries, still Nichetti must have been pleased.) His black-and-white neorealism derives ingeniously from De Sica's great work *The Bicycle Thief* without actually quoting it. Nichetti's best flights, however, are in the uses he makes of fantasy. By mingling commercials and neorealism and by mingling both with the complacent family of today, Nichetti slips in some larger questions. He doesn't gild the past: the worker and his wife often quarrel, are often hungry. But the modern husband and wife never quarrel, never really do anything. They just prattle or not; or snooze; or loaf—around the altar of the TV set. They are better off than the earlier family. Almost.

As his mustached self, Nichetti performs something like a puppet. I mean that as a compliment: his movements are stylized yet not abstract. As the worker, he plays with double understanding: of the man and of the man as a character in a 1950 film. Caterina Sylos Labini rings true as his wife with show-biz dreams. The blond model—English-speaking—is Heidi Komarek,

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Ariel. *A really black comedy, taciturn and deep, about injustice and bad luck. From, of all places, Finland. An impressive introduction to the director-author, Aki Kaurismäki. (Reviewed 8/20&27/90)* **Cinema Paradiso.** *Still playing and still purveying the rich flavors of a Sicilian boy's life growing up with the town film theater as his real nurture. (2/19/90)* **Pretty Woman.** *Julia Roberts stakes a claim to old-fashioned stardom in this new twist on the Pygmalion myth—an LA hooker and a visiting tycoon, Richard Gere. Very pleasant piffle. (4/16/90)* **Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!** *Amusing sizzle in this comedy-romance about a Madrid porn star and the adoring fan who abducts her. Pedro Almodóvar at his near-best. (5/14/90)* **—SK**

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whose voice and speech are much like Audrey Hepburn's.

Nichetti's original title was *Ladri di Saponette* (*Thieves of Soap Bars*), a play on De Sica's original title, *Ladri di Biciclete*. His translators have devised a relevant English title that plays on De Sica's English title. The new title gleams on the American debut of this delightfully gifted, humanely comic actor-writer-director.

Two early films by Nanni Moretti—also an actor-writer-director—were shown briefly in New York just as Nichetti's film approached. In August the Film Society of Lincoln Center presented a sixteen-day series, with at least two films a day, of some of the best Italian work since World War II. Included were **Ecce Bombo**, Moretti's debut in 1977, and **Golden Dreams**, winner of the 1981 Venice prize.

Under the credits of the first, we hear a man's hoarse voice calling the words "Ecce Bombo," roughly "Here comes Bombo," and only well along in the picture do we learn that this is the cry of a street vendor as he peddles his cart along. The connection of this image with the rest of the film is slim but wiry. The story is mostly concerned with a young Roman student named Michele, played by Moretti, and four male friends—and some girlfriends—who are shopping and selling: shopping for ways to live or selling views that they hold. From start to finish *Ecce Bombo* is the work of an iconoclastic temperament, witty, rude, eruptive, compassionate—something like a young Godard who has seen the films of the first young Godard.

The picture is immersed in film reference. It begins on a film set. On Michele's bedroom wall is a huge photo of Buster Keaton. When Michele quarrels with a middle-class boor, his crowning insult is "You deserve Alberto Sordi"—Sordi being the adored comic film embodiment of middle-class troubles.

Ecce Bombo is a latter-day urban version of Fellini's *I Vitelloni*, which dealt with small-town youthful discontent in 1953. *Golden Dreams* is a contemporary treatment of some of the themes of Fellini's *8½*, which dealt with the creative difficulties of a film director in 1963. Moretti again plays a Michele (not exactly the same one—the family backgrounds are different) who has made a first film something like *Ecce Bombo* and who is now trying to organize his second film while running the gauntlet of public appearances and debates about his first. He even engages in a TV confrontation with another young director that ends in a boxing match.

All this is dryly funny; what are hilarious are the scenes from a film he is writing about Freud, his daughter and mother. Michele sits down to write their scenes. We then watch the scenes and watch Freud and his family falter as we cut to Michele's pen faltering.

Moretti also plays another young man, a bearded professor in love with one of his students, about whom he fantasizes. This strand of fantasy ends with a horror-movie joke. And we see a sequence from another young director's film, a spry musical about Vietnam protests in '68, clearly meant to show us how emptily theatrical those protests seem to Michele's generation.

Both of these Moretti films are overlong, seemingly crammed with everything that was on his mind; yet both of them reveal a bursting, angry, exultant spirit, an individual inscribing his generation's particularities on the screen with talent and imagination. His best qualities surged forward to complete realization in his 1985 film *The Mass Is Ended* (TNR, May 30, 1988), in which Moretti was a young priest trying to deal with the problems of his former university companions in Rome. That beautiful work is Moretti's *summa* so far.

In any case, despite any reservations, Italy is lucky to have two such artists at work as Nichetti and Moretti, tragicomedians of the visible and invisible life around them. •

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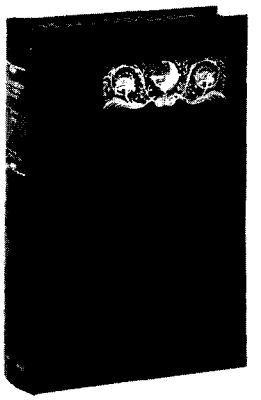

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Richard Nixon's twisted relation to power.

Means of Descent

BY ALAN BRINKLEY

I.

"History will make the final judgment," Richard Nixon wrote in 1978, describing some of his many bitter battles with his opponents. "It is a judgment I do not fear." But for someone who claims not to fear the judgment of history, Nixon has spent an inordinate amount of time trying to shape or obstruct it. No American president has written so voluminously about himself. His newest memoir is his eighth book and his third autobiography. Nor has any former president ever fought so hard to restrict public access to the records of his administration. Because of his relentless efforts, only a small fraction of those records are yet available to scholars. The recently opened Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, California, is the only modern presidential library that contains no presidential papers—largely because the National Archives and the scholarly community do not trust an institution controlled by Nixon to handle them responsibly.

Still, Nixon is, arguably, the most important American public figure of the postwar era. Historians are drawn to his career no matter how inhospitable he makes their task, and there is already a large and rapidly growing scholarly literature on Nixon's life and tempestuous presidency. The appearance within the last year of five major works provides an occasion to look at where things stand in the burgeoning world of Nixon scholarship.

With much of the documentary record closed, most of the work so far has concentrated, unsurprisingly, on those parts of the Nixon story that have always been most clearly visible (if never fully understood): the character of the man, his roller-coaster-like political fortunes, and the connection between the two. That Nixon is intelligent, talented, and energetic no one questions. But those qualities help explain only his successes. What of his spectacular failures?

ALAN BRINKLEY is professor of history at the City University of New York Graduate School.

Two very different answers seem to be emerging. The first, congenial to Nixon's admirers and to Nixon himself, attributes the many crises of his long career less to his own personality than to the climate in which he worked: to the bitter political world of the postwar years, which produced his harsh early campaigns; to the turbulent era of the Vietnam War, which produced his embattled presidency and, ultimately, Watergate. Nixon made mistakes, but he was in the end a victim of passions he neither created nor controlled. The second answer, long an article of faith to many liberals, holds Nixon himself directly accountable for his failures. An instinctively combative, polarizing leader, a politician harboring enormous grievances and resentments, an intensely secretive and devious man, he was unfit for high office and was undone by his personal failings.

In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat and Renewal
by Richard Nixon
(Simon and Schuster, 352 pp., $22.95)

Richard Nixon and His America
by Herbert S. Parmet
(Little, Brown, 784 pp., $24.95)

Richard Milhous Nixon: The Rise of an American Politician
by Roger Morris
(Henry Holt, 1,005 pp., $29.95)

Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician, 1962-1972
by Stephen E. Ambrose
(Simon and Schuster, 704 pp., $24.95)

The Wars of Watergate: The Last Crisis of Richard Nixon
by Stanley I. Kutler
(Knopf, 704 pp., $24.95)

Any credible explanation of Nixon's career will naturally take into account both the times and the man; striking the proper balance between the two is what provokes disagreement. The studies of Nixon that appeared in the wake of Watergate generally took stark positions. And while most of the new Nixon studies are less absolute in their evaluations, all in the end fall clearly on one side of the divide or the other.

II.

No one has pressed the "Nixon as victim" argument more strenuously than Nixon himself, and his most recent memoir includes another attempt to exculpate himself and blame others. There are few new revelations here about the controversial issues of his presidency, but there is a change in tone from his 1978 autobiography. He is, if anything, less conciliatory than he was then, less willing to admit wrongdoing, more resentful of his enemies.

This is a curious book. It has no discernible structure or theme. Much of it is a series of homilies on aspects of everyday life ("Time," "Temperance," "Reading," "Conversation," "Recreation," "Illness"), offering such aphorisms as "Expressions of sympathy to people who are ill are always deeply appreciated" or "Thinking is particularly vital for politicians." Other sections discuss aspects of his life since resigning the presidency: his recovery from depression and illness in the mid-1970s, his long battle to regain the public ear, his travels and meetings with world leaders, and his fairly conventional views of the new international order that he believes he helped produce.

Nixon discusses Watergate only briefly here and adds little to his much more extensive 1978 account. He does, however, confront with a new belligerence what he calls the "myths" of the scandal, "the smoke screen of false charges that ultimately undercut my administration's ability to govern effectively." It is hard to refute his challenge to what he calls "the most blatantly false myth": that he personally ordered the break-in at the Democratic headquarters in 1972. No direct evidence has ever arisen to support that charge. Less convincing are his answers to other, more generally accepted accusations. The "smoking gun" tape of June 23, 1972, does not prove that he conspired to obstruct justice, Nixon says, because the plan he authorized at that time (ordering the CIA to intervene and halt the FBI's investigation of the break-in) was later abandoned. The erasure of eighteen-and-a-half minutes of tape was clearly an accident, since "it begs credulity to believe that I or my staff would erase this one segment of tape and yet leave untouched dozens of hours of other frank and earthy conversations that I clearly would have preferred not to have seen public." Nixon did not "deliberately" lie to the public during the Watergate crisis. "I was not that stupid. . . . I knew the facts ultimately would come out."

The intrigues of his 1972 re-election

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campaign, he concludes, were no different from the "political dirty tricks and other kinds of vicious tactics" he had himself always faced in "the cut-and-thrust of political warfare." Few people familiar with the extent and nature of those intrigues would agree with that. But Nixon may have a point in claiming that "not taking a higher road than my predecessors was my central mistake."

Why should Nixon pay a higher price than his predecessors for routine political misdeeds? Because, he plausibly claims, he had powerful enemies who hated him with unusual passion. Why this exceptional hatred? Because, Nixon less plausibly insists, he too often proved the "liberal establishment" wrong. His role in the Alger Hiss case during his first term in Congress, he argues (not for the first time), won him powerful and permanent enemies. "From that time on," he says, "my press, except for the work of a few objective reporters, turned sour." (In fact, Nixon received overwhelmingly good press for his role in the Hiss case.) The Vietnam War greatly expanded the ranks of his enemies, less because he continued the war, he insists, than because he ended it. "The fact that we succeeded in getting a peace agreement in 1973 on terms [the anti-war forces] said were impossible to negotiate only added fuel to the flames of hatred." (In fact, Nixon's popularity rose, even among many liberals, every time he de-escalated the war; it was the escalations that enraged his critics.)

RN, Nixon's 1978 memoir, is among the most impressive of all presidential autobiographies, and perhaps no more self-serving than other examples of the genre. *In the Arena* is a much inferior book—more evasive, more distorting of the past, and ultimately rather tedious. Yet it is also curiously revealing. One can almost feel the layers of restraint and inhibition with which Nixon has tried to withhold his resentments from the public falling away as he grows older. There are fewer pious assurances of his respect for those he opposes, more open assaults. On the press: "Today the media consider themselves outside of and above society at large, looking down haughtily as they fire their thunderbolts at the rest of us." (Not, perhaps, entirely untrue, but a far cry from Nixon's familiar hypocritical expressions of regard for journalists and their craft.) On the Democratic Congress of the 1970s: "We won the war but then lost the peace. . . . Congress destroyed our ability to enforce the Paris agreement and left our allies vulnerable to Hanoi's invading forces." (This is the long-standing argument of

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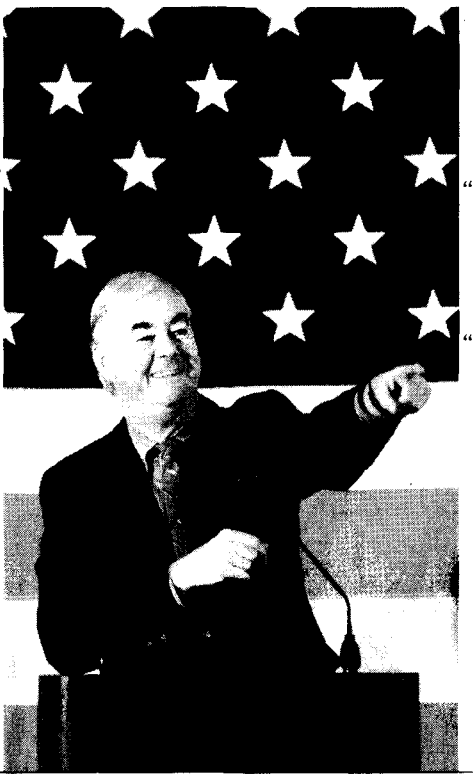
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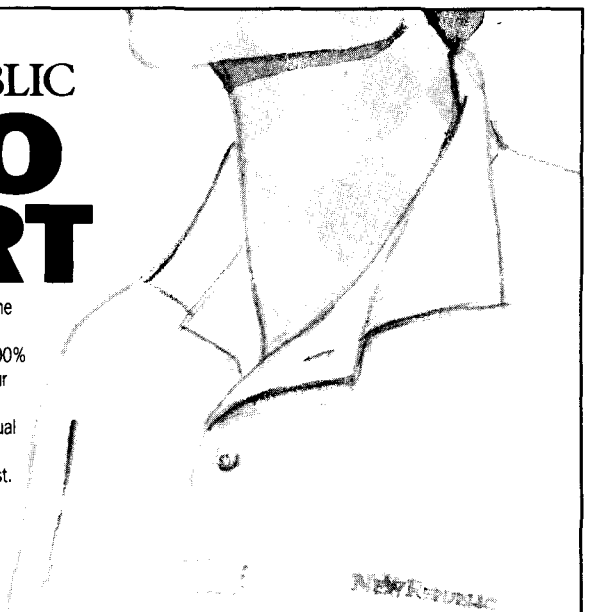

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Nixon, Kissinger, and most of those involved in the Paris accords; few others believe that anything short of another full-scale American intervention—a political impossibility under almost any conceivable circumstances—could have saved South Vietnam in 1975.)

Most of all, perhaps, this third (and presumably final) attempt at autobiography exposes Nixon's image of his own place in history: as a great leader (in the mold of Churchill, de Gaulle, the two Roosevelts) who lived in dangerous times, ran great risks, stood against the tides of popular sentiment, and suffered exceptional assaults as a result. Just as Churchill was hounded out of power in the 1930s for taking unpopular but correct positions on Nazi Germany, so Nixon was ultimately driven from office for defending unpopular but correct positions on communism, national security, and Vietnam. He has, as he describes it, spent his career rejecting the "easy path" to political success and following a more difficult and perilous course. "History will treat me fairly," he predicts. But, he adds, with a characteristic tone of martyrdom, "Historians probably won't, because most historians are on the left."

III.

One historian whom he may well conclude has treated him fairly is Herbert Parmet, one of the few scholars to whom Nixon has granted interviews and access to some of the papers he controls. Parmet attempts to place Nixon in context, to portray him more as the product of great social and cultural forces than of his own personal idiosyncrasies. Indeed, this book explores the context so assiduously that Nixon himself at times disappears from view. The Red-bashing Nixon campaigns of 1946 and 1950, for example, fade into the background of a broader account of the pervasive anti-communism of the postwar years. The story of Nixon's astonishing political ascent in the 1950s is submerged in a broad account of the historic divisions between the eastern, internationalist wing and western, isolationist wing of the Republican Party.

Parmet has not written an apologia. He takes due note of many of Nixon's failings and mistakes. This is, however, a generally sympathetic, even admiring book. It portrays Nixon as a politician of rare skill and energy; as a domestic leader of unusual daring; and as an important world leader in the vanguard of historic changes. It is, one suspects, the way many scholars might portray Nixon if there had been no Watergate—quite literally, since Watergate is hardly mentioned. (Parmet has devoted fewer than four of his 650 pages of text to the scandals—a puzzling decision for which he offers no explanation.)

Parmet's picture of the forces opposing Nixon in the 1960s and early 1970s—the New Left, the anti-war movement, an increasingly radical liberal establishment—is every bit as alarming as Nixon's own account of "this season of mindless terror ... this epidemic of unprecedented domestic terrorism" in *RN*. Little wonder, Parmet implies, that the administration resorted to unusual measures in dealing with its critics. In those extraordinary times, it may be that no other course was possible. Despite the impressive energy with which Parmet makes his case, that answer seems incomplete.

IV.

No one can deny that Nixon's long career brought him into contact with an unusual number of difficult and divisive issues and that for much of his political life Nixon attracted exceptional hostility from many opponents. But most of those who have attempted to explain Nixon reject the idea that these external problems were the principal cause of his demise. Just as Nixon was the architect of his spectacular successes, they suggest, so he was the architect of his equally spectacular failures.

Roger Morris, who served as a member of the National Security Council staff during the Johnson and Nixon administrations, spent seven years working on his study of Nixon's early life. It is a dauntingly long book, and it carries the story only as far as Nixon's election to the vice presidency in 1952. But it is a stunning piece of work—the most thorough and sensitive account of Nixon's youth and early career, and the most revealing portrait of the man, anyone has yet written.

Among other things, Morris skillfully reveals the personal and political inclinations Nixon absorbed in his youth. He grew up in modest, but (despite his occasional claims to the contrary) not impoverished, circumstances. His family was generally stable and—given the rigorously unemotional Quakerism to which his parents subscribed—loving. If there were scars from Richard Nixon's childhood, they came from the traumatic deaths of two of his four brothers, and the extended separations from his mother that one brother's losing bout with tuberculosis required. Noticeably solitary even as a young child, he became even more private and withdrawn as he grew older, a "lonely boy" with a "fragile sense of self," as Morris describes him. The deaths of his brothers also seemed to reinforce his "conventional diligence" and turn it into something else: an almost obsessive impulse to strive. It was as if he became determined to fulfill in his own life his parents' combined hopes for all their children.

After a successful college and law school career in which Nixon excelled academically and strove almost indiscriminately for distinction in extracurricular activities, he returned home to Whittier, California, and took an unpromising job (arranged for him by his mother) in a dreary local law office handling wills, traffic violations, and minor torts. He doggedly pursued and eventually won the glamorous Patricia Ryan, despite her initial, almost contemptuous disinterest. (She allowed Nixon to drive her into Los Angeles for weekends spent dating other men and then return to pick her up on Sundays.) And he searched constantly for a way to escape what he considered the mediocrity of his circumstances. He got involved in local politics with enormous if unreflective fervor. He took a job in the wartime Office of Price Administration, rose quickly, and then suddenly departed to enlist in the Navy—convinced, apparently, that a military record was essential to a political career. He returned to Whittier after the war and proposed himself, improbably, as a candidate for Congress.

Morris's exhaustive account of the 1946 congressional race in which the unknown Richard Nixon defeated the nationally respected veteran congressman Jerry Voorhis is a masterpiece of reconstruction—particularly in its portrait of the political climate of Southern California in the late 1940s. From the beginning, he reveals, Nixon's political career was the product of money: money from rising middle-class entrepreneurs eager for untrammeled access to advancement; money from the wealthy conservative establishment of Pasadena and San Marino, eager for a representative more responsive to their desires than the resolutely independent Voorhis; above all, perhaps, money from developers and others enraged at Voorhis's role in blocking controversial projects in his district. "Most of the lavish 1946 financing was never acknowledged," Morris writes. "Richard Nixon's furtive, mincing attitude toward political money, the gradual atrophy of ethics that ended so painfully thirty years later, began in the first campaign."

Nixon's rise was also the product of raw power: the power of *The Los Angeles Times* (and its autocratic political editor Kyle Palmer), which early on decided to promote Nixon's career in the California Republican Party as a counter to the relatively non-partisan Earl Warren.

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"Greens speak much of ecology and note, correctly, that the natural world is made up of complicated connections we can only begin to understand. But they demand that the human world, in which similar connections create markets and cities and communications networks, be smashed into its component parts."
—VIRGINIA I. POSTREL, "THE GREEN ROAD TO SERFDOM"

"The freedom to truck and barter produces megamillionaires, but the constraints of voluntary exchange reduce even these to mere salesmen dependent on the goodwill of others. And that can be a lot to stomach."
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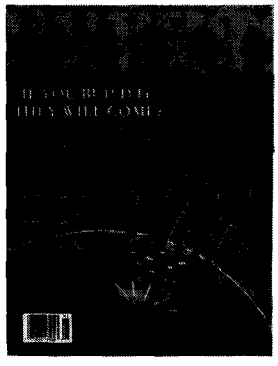

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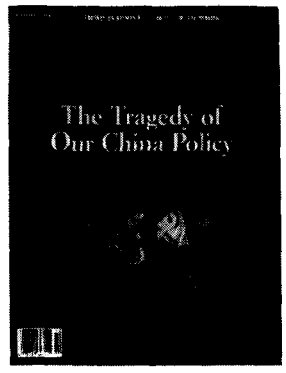

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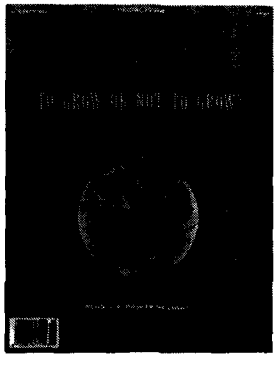
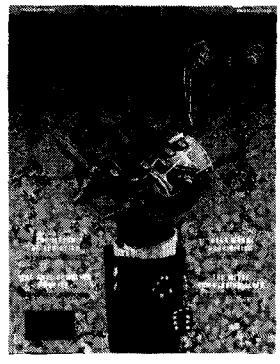


"Cities are but microcosms of the larger economy. What failed in the Soviet Union for its entire economy is bound to fail also in our cities—and for the same reasons."
—LYNN SCARLETT, "THE SEDUCTION OF PLANNING"

"There is something distasteful about the entire 'peace dividend' debate, even beyond the budget chicanery that calls an increase in defense spending a reduction. All of the arguments of those who would spend whatever is finally 'cut' from defense on other programs rest on the implicit assumption that this money belongs to the government."
—CHARLES OLIVER, "SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES"



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The *Times* shamelessly publicized Nixon's reckless attacks on Voorhis while denying even the most minimal coverage to Voorhis's responses. This first Nixon campaign, like many later ones, was a well-oiled, well-financed juggernaut. Voorhis never knew what hit him.

Morris also makes clear how centrally involved Nixon himself was with every element of this strategy. "So complete was his attention to detail, so insistent the control," Morris observes, "that the candidate himself even decided the precise telephone poles and other locations" for campaign posters. He brought to the campaign as well a quite extraordinary meanness. It was not the bankers and businessmen, but Nixon himself (encouraged by his combative manager Murray Chotiner) who decided to saturate the district with broad implications that Voorhis was a Communist; who drowned out Voorhis's own feeble voice with false charges of CIO and other "radical" affiliations; who saw to it that the debates between the two men were packed with obstreperous Nixon supporters who shouted down or laughed at Voorhis's floundering efforts to respond to his opponent's assaults. Nixon himself and some of his admirers like to describe the 1946 campaign as a tough battle in which Nixon skillfully outperformed his opponent. Morris shows that this was an exceptionally dirty campaign, distinguished by Nixon's remarkable drive and his equally remarkable absence of inhibitions. Nothing, it seemed, was unthinkable if it contributed to victory.

Nixon's two terms in Congress were marked by his attentiveness to his district (to his constituents in general and to his wealthy patrons in particular) and by his service on the House Un-American Activities Committee, whose members were held in such general and deserved contempt that Nixon received favorable press coverage simply by being less of a buffoon than his colleagues. But it was his involvement in the Hiss case that transformed him from an earnest newcomer into a national figure. Morris adds relatively little to the well-chronicled history of the case itself, but he does make a strong case for its effects on Nixon's view of public life. "The case was heady schooling," Morris writes:

> in the manipulation of the press, in the frailty and caprice of congressional colleagues, in the craven ambition and ready cannibalism of the establishment, in the easy disregard of secrecy and procedure on all sides, in the significance of covert actions and alliances and the utter politicization of every governmental act. . . . No other episode or experience would so mark Richard Nixon, so inspire such pride or sense of success, burn so deeply its cynical, scarring moral.

Nixon's 1950 Senate contest against Helen Gahagan Douglas was in many ways a replay on a larger stage of his 1946 campaign against Voorhis. It pitted him against another favorite of national liberals (and, apparently, of Morris himself). His campaign was fueled again by money and press favoritism. It was marked by false and reckless accusations of communism (and this time also by smirking sexual innuendos). Now, however, Nixon's tactics received national publicity, and won him a deeper and more lasting enmity than any other single episode in his pre-presidential career. It was the Douglas campaign, not the Hiss case, that first created the corps of "Nixon-haters" who plagued him for the rest of his career.

Nixon was hardly seated in the Senate before he began maneuvering to advance himself further. For the next two years he worked hard at ingratiating himself with the national leadership of the Republican Party. He attended the 1952 convention publicly pledged to Governor Earl Warren of California. But even while riding on Warren's campaign train to Chicago, he was working hard to undermine the unity of the state delegation and draw support to Eisenhower, who had by then dangled the prospect of the vice presidency before him. At the same time, Nixon was assuring the conservatives behind Taft that he was privately sympathetic to them. When the Eisenhower camp chose him for the ticket, they reasoned—correctly—that he would create a bridge between warring factions of the party.

Early in the fall campaign, reporters created a roiling controversy when they revealed the existence of a "secret Nixon fund"—donations from wealthy contributors to defray Nixon's political expenses as a senator. Morris's account of the 1952 dilemma is less sympathetic than some others. He concedes that the controversial "Nixon fund" was not illegal or even unusual; but it was, he claims, handled with the same furtiveness, the same disregard for normal proprieties, that characterized virtually all of Nixon's political funding, before and after. The Checkers speech, in which Nixon both abased and redeemed himself, strikes Morris as simultaneously brilliant and bathetic. Hence its dual effect of saving Nixon's career and fueling the growing animus toward him among liberal elites. "Through it all," Morris notes, "there grew in some the seeds of an almost instinctive, inchoate revulsion at the man . . . a throbbing wish to be rid of this troubling new phenomenon." It also won him a host of new admirers and established him as an authentic spokesman for what he would later call the "Silent Majority." The polarizing effects of Nixon's public presence were established early.

For nearly a decade after that, however, Nixon took pains to moderate his political tactics and soften his public image. Determined critics, of whom there were now many, remained unconvinced. But most Americans, even many who voted against him, considered Nixon an impressive, even statesmanlike vice president and an honorable candidate for president in 1960. It was his unsuccessful 1962 race for governor of California, and his intemperate "last press conference" after his defeat, that revived the old image of sanctimoniousness and resentment; seldom in his subsequent career was Nixon able to escape that image.

He certainly does not escape it in the second volume of Stephen Ambrose's biography, which begins just after the 1962 campaign (Nixon's seventh) and concludes at the end of the 1972 contest (his ninth). This new book is in some respects very similar to its predecessor. It is based on extensive, although not exhaustive, research. It is relentlessly organized along chronological lines. (Chapters are carefully dated: "October16-December 31, 1969," "January-April 1971.") And it is, on the whole, engagingly written.

It is, however, a more passionate work than the previous volume—perhaps because it is the work of a man who spent the years he now chronicles as an embittered critic of his subject. (In 1970 Ambrose jeopardized his academic career by loudly heckling during a presidential speech at Kansas State University, where he was then teaching.) Ambrose portrays Nixon as a talented politician, to be sure, but also as a man so poisoned by resentment and anger that even his apparently magnanimous moments are carefully calculated and mined for personal advantage. If there is a single theme pervading this book, it is what Ambrose considers the critical difference between Nixon and Eisenhower (the subject of an earlier, more admiring Ambrose biography): "Eisenhower was a man full of love, for life and for people, while Nixon, sadly, was a man who all too often gave in to an impulse to hate."

Ambrose has written a straightforward, largely non-analytical narrative. He declines to speculate on the origins of Nixon's passions and insecurities. But this is still a highly judgmental book. The author offers a running (and sometimes gratuitous) commentary on Nixon's misdeeds, ridiculing the "whoppers" and "beautys" in the president's dishonest

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public statements and making clear his dislike for the man. As contemptuous as he is of Nixon's political methods, however, he is equally contemptuous of Nixon's most strident critics on the left. Student protest in the Nixon years, he claims, "reached previously unimaginable heights of bad taste, disgraceful and inexcusable behavior, downright insanity, and pure unadulterated terrorism." So intense is Ambrose's dislike of the student left that he even has kind words for the Huston plan: the extravagant (and unimplemented) White House scheme for spying on American dissidents that J. Edgar Hoover rejected as reckless and illegal. Perhaps, he suggests, "a wiretap on a Weatherman phone" might have saved the life of the graduate student killed in the bombing at the University of Wisconsin. Perhaps, although it seems more likely that the Huston plan, like subsequent efforts by the administration to undermine the opposition, would have targeted mainly the mainstream figures on the White House "enemies" list, not the Weathermen.

Ambrose's assessment of the achievements of the first presidential term is generally favorable. Nixon was, he says, "a bold, innovative, high-risk president who ... succeeded in bringing a majority of his countrymen with him on adventures into wholly new areas." Among those new areas, of course, are the opening to China and the beginnings of détente with the Soviet Union. But Ambrose also, and not unreasonably, admires some of the innovations in Nixon's domestic policy: the proposed Family Assistance Plan, the effort to reorganize the federal bureaucracy and transfer authority back to the states, the appointment to the Supreme Court of Warren Burger, Harry Blackmun, and Lewis Powell. Balanced against that are what Ambrose considers the wholly unnecessary four-year delay in ending American involvement in the Vietnam War; Nixon's avoidable failure to win approval of many of his most important domestic initiatives; and the president's consistent tendency to put political interests first and policy interests second, to favor style over substance.

For all his particular judgments, Ambrose is reluctant to offer a final, general evaluation of Nixon's first term as president. "Nixon deserved to be reelected [in 1972] and deserved to be repudiated," he concludes with what he concedes is "mealymouthed" indecision. Even so, Ambrose's able narrative reinforces the picture of Nixon that emerges from Morris's book and to some degree, inadvertently, from Nixon's own: of a man determined to reach for "greatness" and a man consumed with anger and resentment toward those he considered his enemies. Many people have been baffled by what they consider the almost schizophrenic division between the "good" Nixon and the "bad" Nixon. But as both Morris and Ambrose make clear, there really is only one Nixon: an almost wholly political man whose successes and failures flowed from the same intense desire for achievement and vindication.

V.

It should not be surprising, perhaps, that a career that began by combining astonishing political talent with seamy political tactics should end that way too. Watergate, if Stanley Kutler is to be believed, was not an aberration or a casual "mistake," but a reflection of the essence of Nixon's political career and his presidency.

Kutler's account of what he aptly calls the "wars" of Watergate has two apparent purposes. One is to bring to this intricate political and legal story a new level of detail drawn from sources that were not available fifteen years ago to the authors of the first generation of Watergate books. The second is to argue that Nixon himself—not the climate of the times, not the "system," not the implacability of his enemies—was responsible for most of what went wrong.

Kutler tells the Watergate story in impressive detail. He offers numerous small revelations and a few big ones. The investigation by the criminal division of the Justice Department, he contends, was much more serious and productive than contemporaries believed and might have broken the case without the appointment of a special prosecutor. Howard Baker was not the fearlessly independent investigator his statements during the Watergate hearings suggested, but an ally of the White House working to protect the president's interests. Robert Bork acted as much out of ambition as out of a sense of duty in agreeing to fire Archibald Cox after his two immediate superiors had resigned rather than do so. *The Washington Post*—and the press in general—were much less important to the unraveling of the conspiracy than most journalists like to believe. (Kutler offers little evidence for this controversial claim.)

Kutler also makes a strenuous effort to tie Nixon directly to the misdeeds of his administration at every point possible. The book begins with a long account of Nixon's pre-presidential career that emphasizes a pattern of behavior from which Watergate logically emerged. It marshals familiar but none-

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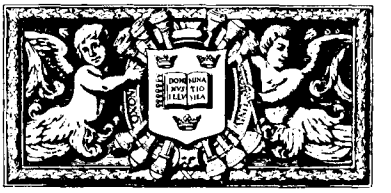

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theless striking evidence of covert activity in the Nixon White House before 1972, closely supervised by the president himself, again to suggest that Watergate was not an aberration. The burglary at the Democratic National Committee, Kutler argues, "must be seen as part of a behavior pattern characterizing the president and his aides that stretched back to the beginnings of the Nixon administration." It "parted the veil that hid the 'underside' of that government." Kutler directly challenges those who argue that Nixon was undone by subordinates exceeding their instructions. If anything, Kutler persuasively suggests (echoing the earlier claims of Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Dean, and others), the president's subordinates were often responsible for thwarting the president's own inclination to engage in even fiercer political combat.

In the end, Kutler's revelations enrich but fail to change the essential outlines of the Watergate story as laid out by J. Anthony Lukas and others in the 1970s. There are no new smoking guns here. Perhaps the most interesting element of this book is Kutler's emphasis on a seemingly obvious factor that other Watergate chroniclers have tended to slight: throughout his presidency, Nixon had to deal with a Democratic Congress. Nixon was the first president of the twentieth century to enter office with both houses of Congress in the control of the opposition, an enormously frustrating situation for a leader with such high ambitions. That dilemma intensified the combative nature of his presidency. It also contributed to his undoing, giving his adversaries control of the crucial investigative bodies—the Senate Watergate Committee and the House Judiciary Committee—that ultimately brought the president down.

VI.

At some point, inevitably, historians of the Nixon presidency will begin to focus on questions that do not hinge on how one assesses Nixon's own personality. For now, however, most Nixon scholarship remains firmly tethered to the irresistibly intriguing task of deciphering Nixon himself. From this literature emerges a picture with many familiar features: vaulting ambition, immense political talent, burning resentments, an almost instinctive deviousness and vindictiveness. (Helen Gahagan Douglas first identified the last in 1950, when she introduced the enduring nickname "Tricky Dick.") But another vital characteristic also emerges as the picture of Nixon's life grows fuller. Some might call it pragmatism, others cynicism. But it is perhaps best described by a word that has come to have special meaning to students of American foreign policy: realism.

Realism as an approach to foreign policy is not the same as realism in ordinary contexts. It suggests an aversion to ideology, an elevation of ends over means, and an essentially pessimistic view of human nature. It stands in opposition to the more moralistic internationalism that in the twentieth century has enchanted American leaders from Woodrow Wilson to Jimmy Carter. No modern presidency has embraced realism in foreign policy more fervently than Nixon's. That was not simply because of the prominent role of Henry Kissinger, a theorist of realpolitik. It was also because Nixon himself, despite a lifetime of highly ideological anti-Communist rhetoric, believed that in the end all national leaders are governed by their own political interests and would respond in predictable ways to someone who advanced or threatened those interests.

For Nixon, however, the realist worldview was not simply a theory of foreign policy. In domestic politics, too, he saw ideals as simply devices disguising ambition. Everyone's motives, he seemed to believe, were cynical and self-serving. Why, then, should anyone be surprised that his were too? The public world was a

Subarctic

Smoke echoes up from a deep fault.
Clearly the hills are bottomed on
A recessed lake of fire.
The stiffening winds blow and blow without a halt.
A day, a week goes by, and not one bird goes by.
Perhaps the glacier's mounting toward
The unclaimed sky.

In the first real darks of autumn the
tundral winds into the hill-caves come
tumbling, dry like the whispered snapping,
amplified a millionfold, of a leaping
candle . . . Only the warmth is missing.

In winter when the light retreats
No dawn with its enfeebled clouds
And flat, off-center sun
Can bring it back. That's done at midnight, when the sheets
Of black-born blues and yellows waver and take flight,
Throwing across the stars a cover
Like candlelight.

(That would be it, the one, the uni-
versal flame—our unreal,
sidereal taper, asway to drafty
transpirations huge beyond any
conceiving. Only the warmth is missing.)

Wrapped each in ice, the bodies go
Bump-bumping downriver in spring
From the high, cracking hills
Where the encasing's done. For all their numbers, though,
The current-clogging multitudes, there's not a trace
Of any body once the melting's
Taken place.

Meanwhile, a summer sun pours itself into a
small blue pool that, equal to anything,
catches it all without rising—merely one
feat in a land of miracles where only
the living and the dead are missing.

Brad Leithauser

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battlefield on which virtually everyone *claimed* to be defending principles but no one really respected them. Friendships, loyalties, ideals, commitments: all were expendable. What mattered in the end was what worked.

Looking at Nixon's exceptionally long political career, it is difficult to identify anything in which he seems genuinely to have believed other than his own advancement and success. He entered politics decrying "corruption" and "special interests," yet from its first moments his public career was fueled by both. He rose to prominence decrying domestic subversion and international communism, yet he abandoned both issues as soon as the political climate changed. He claimed to revere the Republican Party but virtually abandoned it as soon as it was no longer useful to him. He spoke movingly at times about what he claimed to believe was the essential decency and generosity of "ordinary Americans," but his private behavior suggests that he considered no one (with the exception of his own mother) truly unselfish.

Pragmatism is not an unworthy political characteristic. In democracies, at least, highly moralistic and ideological leaders are less often successful than those willing to adapt themselves to political realities. In Nixon's case, political realism was responsible for most of what is impressive about his career and his presidency: the ability to build bridges among contending factions in his party; the willingness to contemplate innovative domestic programs; the openness to new relationships with historic adversaries. But there was always something missing. Nixon's pragmatism was not a tool for some larger goal. It was itself the essence of the man.

All successful politicians are aware that public life is rife with conflict and duplicity, that they must constantly weigh ideals against self-interest. But great leaders are not simply those who master the game with unusual skill, who "believe in the battle" (as Nixon claims to do) and gain satisfaction from being "in the arena" and reaching the "mountaintop." They are those to whom something matters beyond political success itself, to whom at least the remnants of a moral compass survive the hurly-burly. The tragedy of Richard Nixon may have been that he was supremely skilled at a craft whose ultimate purposes meant nothing to him. He climbed to the mountaintop, it seems, simply because it was there. •

Get Real

BY GEOFFREY HAWTHORN

Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works Volume I: Introduction to the Human Sciences edited by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi

(Princeton University Press, 524 pp., $55)

The "human sciences" are not a field. Or if they are, the field extends from psychology to the far reaches of aesthetics. They are, more properly, an aspiration. To grasp the human, it is suggested, we must see the facts of life in the light of the constructions that those who live it put on them. This aspiration is not new. In England, Mill talked of the "moral science." In Germany, this was translated as *Geisteswissenschaften*. Wilhelm Dilthey was uneasy with the term; too much spirit, he thought, not enough substance. Still, it was the "least inappropriate" term. He was excited by the conception, and he set out to capture it.

Yet as Michael Ermarth said twelve years ago, at the start of his subtle account of how Dilthey tried to do so, the man "who brought the theoretical problem of interpretation and 'understanding' (*Verstehen*) to the forefront of controversy himself presents a major problem of interpretation." This is not merely because Dilthey, as a theologian and later a philosopher, sensitive to the arts and attracted by the sciences, interested in history and public affairs, had a great deal to say.

Though he did have a lot to say. Born in 1833, he set out his first thoughts in the 1850s, took the senior chair of philosophy in Berlin in 1882, and was active until he died in 1911, contributing to, as well as suffering, the *Hegelstreit*, the *Religionstreit*, the *Materialismusstreit*, the *Darwinismusstreit*, the *Pessimismusstreit* and the *Methodenstreit*. He worked for more than fifty years, often fourteen hours a day, to produce intellectual histories of European thought, lectures and treatises and drafts of further treatises on logic, epistemology, ethics, psychology, politics, law, and the nature and foundations of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, essays on poetry, music, and the theory of aesthetics, intellectual biographies of Schleiermacher and the young Hegel, shorter accounts of Goethe and Hölderlin, and pieces on almost all his intellectual contemporaries. (In the German edition, his collected works already run to twenty volumes, and there is much unpublished material. Rudolf Makkreel, Frithjof Rodi, and their collaborators are translating most of the less ephemeral items—but not the longer biographies and some of the intellectual history—into just six volumes, of which this is the second to appear.) Nor does the difficulty in interpreting Dilthey arise merely because he was always reading more, reconsidering his thought, giving a new course, and writing a fresh plan. Though, again, he was: his students called him the man of first volumes.

The Dilthey problem lies rather in his ambition. He saw sense in almost every position, exclusive truth in none; and with a striking lack of despair, he tried until the very end to make them all cohere. William James was put off by his odd attire and his habit, even in his thirties, of taking a nap at the table, but was greatly taken by his liveliness and his breadth of learning and his sympathy "with regard to everything knowable and unknowable." Dilthey, as Edmund Husserl later remarked, was as "genial" in his intuitions and dispositions as he was in person. Even in his seventies, he said to a son-in-law that he hoped to go on until he was 110. His sense of what he had to do was clear to him at the start. He did not succeed in doing it, at least in the way in which he thought he might be able to. But his grasp of the issues, especially of how one bore upon another, was acute.

As he repeatedly insisted, the issues were at once intellectual and practical. Kant had rethought thought, but his three critiques had left the human sciences in the air. The first took its model of what we might know and how we might know it from the sciences of nature. The second, although it discussed practical reason, was ahistorical. The third considered the synthesizing powers of the mind with respect only to art. And all three, Fichte and Hegel were to argue, implied exactly what Kant had said that they denied: the possibility of a knowledge that transcended experience. Hegel's own argument, which claimed to answer the questions of philosophy and

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thereby to end history as well (the problems of the one were the problems of the other) had been all the rage in the 1820s and '30s. Indeed, it acquired a royal assent; professors were dismissed for resisting it.

But a new group of affectedly empirical historians was already undermining it, and by the 1850s it had been all but abandoned. Among the philosophers, even among Hegel's former admirers, it had given way to what Dilthey called "a presumptuous passion for scientific construction." *Realismus*, not *Idealismus*, was the new watchword. The tendency was more evident abroad—Dilthey pointed to Comte's superficially scientific synthetic "sociology" and to Mill's proposal to found his moral science on a human "ethology"—but it had its advocates at home, too. Fichte and Hegel and other idealists had revived a metaphysics with the arguments that Kant had developed to destroy it. They had themselves been rejected. But the new "positivists" were all but proposing a new metaphysics in the name of a method that they claimed had superseded it.

The positivists were also ahistorical. This was unacceptable to those who sensed the change of temper in the German lands after 1848, the possibilities presented by their unification after 1870, and the new economy, society, and politics. Dilthey stylized the issue. "The mechanical age has produced a mechanistic construction of psychic life through psychophysics," he mused in the 1890s, "and has developed a political mechanism in . . . social democracy, in which each person is a cog in a machine. . . . The political analogue of this is universal suffrage." (The age had also produced "naturalism in art, the power of the press, the dissolution of the social fabric through luxury, the dominance of women, salons, etc.") "Only when we succeed in developing . . . inner experience," he suggested, "and the human sciences . . . can the spiritual life of Europe receive a new impetus."

This has all the air of the unremarkable distaste of a German mandarin, inward and insulated from life. In his person, he was: once he abandoned theology and turned to philosophy, he was an academic without interruption, in Basel, Kiel, Breslau, and Berlin. But he was also, in a quiet way, engaged. He aligned himself with the skeptical, antistatist wing of the National Liberals. He believed that there was too much of Hegel in Marx's abstract theory of value, too little attention to real human need, but he could see the changes that the socialists were pointing to. And he saw that "the driving force of the modern scientific spirit is an insatiable longing for reality." Having transformed the study of nature, "it now wants to take possession of the socio-historical world," to encompass the rest and to "attain the means of directing the workings of human society." But the enthusiasts forget, he said, that "the human sciences have developed from the sphere of practical life . . . and have been cultivated through the requirements of professional training" in politics and the law. This is where one should start: not with abstraction or generality, but with lived experience, *Erlebnis*, from which thought itself derives. "*Empirie*," Dilthey insisted, "*nicht Empirismus*": the empirical, but not empiricism. The human sciences are rooted in "the standpoint of life."

Of all the post-Kantian philosophers, there were in his view only two who had kept their heads. The first was Schleiermacher. Declaring himself "neutral" between the idealists and the realists, Schleiermacher had insisted on a continuously dialectical relation between thought and being, mind and nature, the self and the world, a relation guided by and grounded, insofar as it could be grounded at all, on an immediate self-awareness. But Schleiermacher was preoccupied by the idea of God, and was indifferent to history. The second was Friedrich Trendelenburg. Trendelenburg had been a pupil of Schleiermacher's, had dominated academic philosophy after Hegel, and had himself taught Dilthey. Trendelenburg's doctrine was not dissimilar. It was a realism that, because it agreed that consciousness had a constitutive role, rejected materialism; an idealism that, because it grounded thought in a real given, stopped short of pure subjectivism. He called it, not unreasonably, *Idealrealismus*. Dilthey took the point. But Trendelenburg was himself, he thought, too much taken with the newly fashionable biology, too insensitive to the variety of social circumstance.

It is clear from his own essays on Goethe and Hölderlin, translated in another volume of this edition, that Dilthey himself was not. He exactly captures the delicate connections between circumstance, character, perception, and thought. (This is also evident from the fragments I've read of his books on Schleiermacher and Hegel.) But his larger purpose was programmatic. "In contemporary science," he wrote in a letter to explain his claim to the Berlin chair, "there is a basic opposition between the abstract theories of eighteenth-century political economy, natural law, and politics, on the one hand, and the Historical School, the demands of social reality, indeed, a more profound feeling of this reality, on the other." According to Dilthey, "The task is to delimit—by means of an appropriate philosophical foundation—those contributions of positive jurisprudence, politics, theology, etc., that have validated historical and social reality, and to adjudicate their dispute with abstract theories." This he set out to do in the first book of the *Introduction*, which appeared in 1883; continued in drafts for further books in the 1890s, which are also translated here; and took up again after 1905 in essays and in a longer work on the *Formation of the Historical World*, which Makkreel and Rodi will include in the second and third volumes of their edition:

> I begin with a straightforward fundamental idea. All science, all philosophy, is experiential. All experience derives its coherence and corresponding validity from the context of human consciousness. The argument between idealism and realism can be resolved by psychological analysis, which can show that the real world given in experience is not a phenomenon in my representation; it is given to me as something distinct from myself, because I am a being that does not merely represent, but wills and feels. The reflexive awareness of the will is as much of the real world as of itself. Both self and the world are given in the totality of psychic life. Each exists in relation to the other, and is equally immediate and true.

It's not surprising that as Dilthey continued to think about all this, he continually shifted his notes from folder to folder. Each part of the picture depends on another, and it is not easy to see where one part ends and the other part begins. Inner experience

> encompasses more than inner perception, for it relates the reflexive awareness of my acts of perceiving, thinking, etc., to outer perceptions, i.e., the objects present in consciousness, thus arriving at a whole in which the facts of my consciousness form a totality of knowledge connected by thought.

But there are perhaps two starting points. The first is that consciousness is a psychic fact, that it is accessible to an empirical psychology. The second is that it "cannot be defined," that it is an "Ultimate datum." "I experience in myself the way in which something is there for me." Yet reflection reveals that there is "a scale of the degree to which the content [of consciousness] is detached from the sensing subject and counterposed to it"; the scale proceeds "from feelings to the sensations of smell and taste, from these to sound, then to what is seen and touched." It followed that understanding others is the "re-translation (*Zurückübersetzung*) of expression," or the ex-

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pressed content of consciousness, "back into the mental life from which it issued."

There are evident difficulties, in the picture itself, and in the tension between its two proposed "foundations." It is also not surprising, therefore, that although contemporaries respected his efforts, Dilthey should have come under some attack. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, he had to contend with Wilhelm Windelband and his pupil Heinrich Rickert, neo-Kantians at Baden. They were transcendentalists, and insisted that a reasoned idea of reality was prior to experience. Dilthey did not find it difficult to dispute this, and in the course of the argument Rickert compromised. But Dilthey was less at ease with psychology. In 1894 a colleague and erstwhile friend at Berlin, Herman Ebbinghaus, who professed the subject, published a paper in which he argued that psychic coherence is not self-evident, as Dilthey had presumed. The psychologist has to construct it. Dilthey sketched a reply, in which he weakly said that the psychologists were not constructing it correctly, but he did not pursue the issue. He turned instead to his biographies and his essays on other matters.

It was Husserl who brought him back to his program. Husserl had been taught by Franz Brentano, and Brentano, like Dilthey, had been a pupil of Trendelenburg. They all agreed that "intentionality" was crucial. But for Husserl, this meant that empirical psychology (and, he added in 1911, "historicism," "world-view philosophies," and all such "relativisms") said nothing to the question of knowledge. They could not account for what the mind strives *toward*. This, he argued in his *Logical Investigations*, was a grasp of reality. Reality was as it was, there to be disclosed; and our attempts to grasp it would reveal its pregiven "sense" in a *Totalanschauung*. Dilthey read the *Investigations* when they were published in 1900-01, and he was at first enthusiastic. They sharpened the distinction between "genetic" or explanatory accounts of knowledge and "foundational" or phenomenological ones. He lectured on them in Berlin, and Husserl went to hear what he had to say. They liked each other. But Husserl was no dialectician: "pure Plato," Dilthey scribbled on his copy of the 1911 paper. The younger man's effect on him in the last five or six years of his life was to make him even more determined to pursue the views he'd started out with forty years before.

Those last thoughts will appear in the next two volumes of the Princeton edition, with which Makkreel and Rodi will have further realized their intention "to emphasize the overall unity of Dilthey's philosophy." It is useful to have such good translations. Still, the intention may be misplaced. This is not to say that it was not Dilthey's own; he did strive for synthesis. But his arguments never settled. His system sways, its parts do not cohere, its foundations shift. It might have been more persuasive, as Ermarth suggests, if he had devised some sharper taxonomies, like Husserl's for the forms of experience, or Georg Simmel's for the forms of social life, or Alexius Meinong's for mental objects.

Still, it's not that Dilthey's reach simply exceeded his grasp. It's that he reached for the wrong thing. He criticized those who emphasized one aspect of understanding at the expense of another. "Petty scholasticism" and a fetish for "method" were his terms of abuse. But even within the generously synthetic conventions of nineteenth-century German philosophy, he was himself too ambitious. It is easy to agree that there are connections, direct and reflexive, between our presuppositions, both those we can articulate and those we cannot; between our emotions and our practical intents; between our experience of objects—material, mental, and other-personal—and our proclivity to generalize and abstract. It is easy also to agree that any account of what we believe, how we come to do so, and how valid those beliefs are, will, if it neglects any of this, be partial. But what Dilthey inadvertently makes plain is that it has to be so. In the end, there is no way to hold it all together—no way to completely explain and understand how it is that we believe what we believe.

Dilthey's unwitting contribution to the idea of complete explanation and understanding is finally to show that the idea is misguided. It has not yet gone. Even if we reject foundations and accept that understanding describes a circle, in which we start from our presuppositions eventually to return to revise them, we're tempted to suppose that there is someone, somewhere, who will explain how understanding does so. That person, we might still think, will be some sort of philosopher. This is not a useful thought. Interpreters must use all their faculties and immerse themselves; philosophers, like scientists, must select and abstract. "Often," Dilthey remarked at the start of one of his innumerable attempts to pin down *Verstehen*, "a method arises in the mind of its discoverer without being accompanied by a full consciousness of its logical character and scope: this consciousness arises only later." He was too optimistic. For interpreting the human, such consciousness has not arisen, and as a full consciousness it is difficult to see how it could arise. Unlike many who have since pursued the aspiration to a human science, however, Dilthey was never tempted to foreclose.

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The Art of the Deal

By E. V. Thaw

An Artful Life: A Biography of D. H. Kahnweiler, 1884-1979 by Pierre Assouline translated by Charles Ruas

(Grove Weidenfeld, 411 pp., $24.95)

Who was Kahnweiler, what was he? Today, even the highbrow remnants who still sing Schubert's song (about Sylvia and what she was) around the piano at home would probably be unable to answer the question. Certainly few Americans will have heard of Kahnweiler, and so it is just as well that here is a major biography, translated from the French, that contains essential information for nothing less than the understanding of twentieth-century painting and sculpture.

Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler was born into a wealthy and cultivated (and assimilated) German Jewish family. In young manhood, he settled in Paris. Looking for something interesting to do, he opened a small art gallery, in 1907. Cézanne had just died; the Impressionists had long been championed by the Durand-Ruel firm; Matisse, Bonnard, and Vuillard were linked to Bernheim-Jeune and its quixotic but brilliant star salesman Felix Fénéon. Ambroise Vollard had already become rich hoarding his Gauguins, Degas, and Cézannes. What was left for a twenty-three-year-old man of methodical mind and good business sense, but with only a modest nest egg from his family?

Promising young artists, of course, was the answer. Matisse was under contract, but the works of his junior "Fauve" colleagues Derain and Vlaminck could be picked up for a few francs. In due course the artists' curiosity about the tiny gallery that was buying their work brought them around for regular visits. And this led to acquaintance with the young radicals Picasso and Braque, then embarking on their famous cubist collaboration "roped together, like mountain climbers," as Braque later characterized it. Thus one thing led to another, and Kahnweiler became the art dealer of the leading cubist painters.

It was Kahnweiler's idea—a curious idea, for those days—that he should have exclusive representation and control of his artists' output. In return, he, the dealer, would look after the worldly needs of his stable, advancing money, doing errands, placating landlords and girlfriends when necessary; that is, leaving his artists free to create without distractions.

To the Kahnweiler canon of cubism he added Leger and Juan Gris, a Spaniard like Picasso, and the artist who eventually became his theoretical ideal and closest friend. Kahnweiler's biography of Gris, written during the Second World War, is still the standard text on the artist, as well as a landmark of cubist theory. During World War I, in exile in Switzerland (he was banned from France as a German and was a pacifist who refused to fight for Germany), he had written his first important critical and theoretical tract, somewhat mistitled in English, *The Rise of Cubism* (*Der Weg von Cubismus*), which by its restrictive choice of artists strongly influenced the orthodox account of twentieth-century art later advanced in this country by Alfred Barr and the Museum of Modern Art.

It was, in fact, only the four cubist painters represented by the Kahnweiler Gallery whom Kahnweiler, the critic wearing his other hat, accepted as authentic. All other followers of the movement, including the brothers Marcel Duchamp, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and Jacques Villon; Delaunay and the Orphic painters; Severini and the Futurists; Metzinger, Gleizes, and other talented artists of the "heroic age"—these were all only "cubifiers," copiers of a mannerism who did not understand what they were trying to do.

It is hard to believe that Kahnweiler the dealer allowed Kahnweiler the critic and art historian any degree of objectivity. The pattern of his prejudice and his apparent blindness was constant. It lasted all his life: interviewing the grand old man in the 1950s, a reporter asked him who among living artists he respected, and he could name only the fifth-rate ones (in addition to Picasso, of course) whom his own gallery represented. He never stopped inveighing against abstract art, Kandinsky and Mondrian becoming favorite targets of abuse. His high moral stance, his undeniable decency as a "good German" in this difficult century, and his wide-ranging culture and reading did not help him to see art history unfold apart from his self-interest as a dealer. Either that, or he had a very poor eye.

This book chronicles the fascinating rivalries and factions—and the fistfights—in the Paris art world during his long career of seven decades. Much has been written about that world, but this is the first book I know of to examine it from the viewpoint of the art market. Such a viewpoint, of course, is rather trendy now, very much a perspective of our own blighted time. (Thus Assouline compares Kahnweiler to Leo Castelli, in order that we may grasp his importance and peculiar position.) Still, it is a valuable historical perspective, long overdue in the literature on modernism and its history. While such a focus on the role of markets in art history may often smack of economic reductionism and Marxist determinism, I sense none of that nonsense here. The rise of the art dealer is a fairly recent phenomenon, which has hardly been studied as yet; a field overlooked so far even by those socially oriented historians of art who will tell you all about the engineering of the boulevards of Paris and the working hours and pay of bargirls and ballet dancers.

Francis Haskell taught us much about the buying and the selling of paintings in the Baroque and Rococo periods, primarily in Italy. Frank Hermann, in his anthology *The English as Collectors*, informed us a bit about how the system worked in early nineteenth-century England. John Rewald has done extraordinary research into the records of Vollard and other dealers for his Cézanne catalogs and his *Cézanne in America*. And yet the surface of the subject has only been scratched. There are considerable methodological problems. Art dealers, it must be said, are often secretive, and in many cases their papers, correspondence, and sales books have not survived. Much more survives, however, than is being studied, and it is to be hoped that Assouline's book and his extensive research will inspire others.

Kahnweiler was an indefatigable letter writer, and Assouline has had access to the entire trove. Moreover, Kahnweiler never had any doubts about the truth and the accuracy of his opinions, and so his correspondence gives an uncompromising and reliable view of his mind and his career. Assouline, despite his liking for his subject, does not, for the most part, hide the blemishes. A full picture of the man emerges clearly, warts and all. Greater

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geniuses in the art-dealing field who were also rivals for Picasso's favor, like Paul Rosenberg, are dismissed as only clever businessmen by Assouline, taking Kahnweiler's side, with no acknowledgment of Rosenberg's legendary expertise and his shrewd preference for handling only masterworks in his field.

Kahnweiler's political judgment stands out as singularly obtuse. Despite all signs to the contrary, and many private warnings, he refused to believe in the imminence of World War I. Since he had not prepared himself against such a conflict—he had neglected to take French citizenship, and so was an enemy alien—his inventory of art, mainly cubist paintings by his four great masters, was seized by the state in 1914 and eventually auctioned in four sessions in 1921 and 1922. The Kahnweiler group of sales at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris was one of the great watershed events of twentieth-century collecting. A large number of the now familiar masterpieces of both analytic and synthetic cubism, oil paintings as well as collages and other works on paper; the celebrated holdings in this field of the museums of Basel, Bern, MOMA in New York; the private collections of Leonard Lauder and Heinz Berggruen; the cubist works that were in Nelson Rockefeller's collection; the André Lefevre, the Paul Eluard-Roland Penrose material—all these and much more can be traced back to that epochal dispersal.

Returning from his wartime Swiss exile with his fortune in art wiped out, Kahnweiler tried to rebuild his career. Not yet a French citizen, he took as his partner and front man a stockbroker friend, André Simon. Henceforth, his galleries were never again known under his own name. The Galerie Simon was his venue until the Second World War. In Switzerland he had developed a friendship with Paul Klee, who shared his German culture and his musical tastes. Trying to survive in the 1920s without Picasso and Braque, both now world-famous and both gone to greener commercial pastures (this was Picasso's period in high society), he took on Klee, whose art theories were actually antithetical to his own. He also learned to broker deals in works by others than his gallery artists, working with the bigger fish like Wildenstein, Durand-Ruel, and Paul Rosenberg.

During the long 1930s depression, his powers of survival were further tested, as were those of all in the art trade. Through André Masson, the artist who was now the star of his gallery (Gris died in 1927), and through his wife's brother-in-law, the writer Michel Leiris, Kahnweiler moved closer to Surrealist circles. But, curiously—again some doubt must be cast on his "eye"—he denigrated Miró and rejected the chance to represent his work. He did, however, loyally and enthusiastically promote a number of artists who are best forgotten today: Bores, Manolo, Beaudin, Kermadec, Roux. As the threat of Hitler and Nazism grew, Kahnweiler moved tentatively toward left-wing, anti-fascist groups. But he fastidiously worried (it was a rather ugly worry) that the exodus of Jewish refugees from middle Europe into France might provoke anti-Semitism and spoil things for his kind. Finally he retained his faith that the Germany of Goethe and Schiller would prevail.

The advent of the Second World War did not catch him quite as unprepared as the first one, but it very nearly did. Having safeguarded a part of his stock, Kahnweiler and his wife stayed in Paris until the day before it was occupied by German troops. They managed to spend the rest of the war in bucolic surroundings in the southern French countryside: "paradise in the shadow of the crematoriums," as he later described it.

Assouline's book gives a fascinating account of the intellectual and artistic worlds of Paris under the occupation. Heroes were few, and many unexpected collaborationists are identified in this book; and some merely amoral quietists engage our curiosity and provoke our judgment. Aryanization determined that all Jewish-owned art firms had to be sold, at least on paper, to non-Jews. Some of the new and racially more acceptable dealers helped to preserve their colleagues' properties, but some made fortunes by taking full advantage of the difficulties of the times.

It is certainly rattling to learn how active the Paris exhibition and gallery system remained during the Nazi period. Cocteau, Vlaminck, and other well-known artistic celebrities skirted the edges of criminal collaboration with their obsequious connections with the enemy. Derain, van Dongen, and Segonzac joined Vlaminck on an exchange propaganda visit to Germany. I was gratified to learn, though, that the rescue at war's end of the famous train full of France's art treasures (it was the subject of a movie starring Burt Lancaster) was accomplished by a Free French commando unit led by my old friend, the late Alexandre Rosenberg, the son of Paul Rosenberg, many of whose paintings were aboard the train. Assouline confirms in print what had been only a pleasant rumor.

The rebirth of the Kahnweiler art business, after the liberation of Paris, took place under a new name, Galerie Louise Lieris. It was his French, gentile sister-in-law who had been the purchaser of the Jewish "Galerie Simon." The Lieris Gallery is still active and holds the valuable archive upon which most of Assouline's biography is based. Picasso, whose war years in Paris were neither uncomfortable nor heroic, emerged in peacetime as the foremost luminary of the French art world. He was quickly co-opted by the Communist Party, though his views on art, as well as the style and content of his work, could not have been more objectionable to its social-realist line. Kahnweiler, a man of the left in a vague way, refused to join Picasso in his much publicized political move, although he was urged to do so.

The two old friends, who had begun to see each other before the war, were close again. Kahnweiler eventually became the sole distribution agent for the Picasso industry, although for a time he had to share whatever paintings Picasso released with Louis Carré, whose wartime success was problematic. The artist's almost diabolical energy unleashed mountains of lithographs and etchings, as well as oil paintings, which he painted at a rate, sometimes, of seven a day.

The story of the later years of Kahnweiler's career is essentially the story of how Picasso's work was distributed in the postwar art boom, about which this excellent study is, unfortunately, less than fully informative. Nothing in Assouline's book instructs about the private arrangement to divide each major release from Picasso between Rosengart in Lucerne, Curt Valentin in New York, and later Eleanor Saidenberg. One would like to know more about the two famous raids on Kahnweiler's exclusivity by the American Sam Kootz, who spoke not a word of French, but arrived at Picasso's house in the south of France with an Oldsmobile as a present and emerged with the first Picassos to be seen in New York after the war. (Later it only took a Mickey Mouse watch to charm the old boy into releasing some more.)

In his last years, the aging Kahnweiler made some serious mistakes, such as disseminating false Legers in which the artist's widow may have also had a financial interest. Nothing about that dishonorable episode appears here, either. Indeed, Kahnweiler lived out his long life covered with honors, and was once again financially strong.

This man—who in 1910 sat for the great portrait by Picasso (now in the Art Institute of Chicago); who in 1914-18 and in exile wrote the first intelligible account of cubist theory and later many articles, and a classic biography of Juan

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Gris; who lost and rebuilt several businesses and fortunes; who closely tied himself to the life and the fortunes of the most protean artist of all time—does not rate even a listing in the Encyclopedia Britannica. He deserves to be better known, for all his flaws. This important book should make him so. •

Domestic Terrors

BY MICHAEL HEYWARD

Family Sins by William Trevor

(Viking, 256 pp., $18.95)

There can be few living writers of English with so sure a touch as William Trevor. He is a master of nuance, of the flick of the wrist that seems to disclose everything. His sense of pace and timing, of the balance between dialogue and description, is flawless. The humor in his work is dark and unforgiving, though he also knows how to be simply funny. His formal understanding of the story is traditional, but he tampers with structure and point of view. He hears the speech of his characters exactly. He never panders to the reader, yet his prose is direct, as supple and spare as a blade of grass. He is the kind of writer whose achievement we are inclined to underestimate because his work does not draw attention to itself and because the mysteries of his technique are not easily visible in the effects he creates. He may write in an unassuming style, but whoever tackles his work in quantity becomes aware of an accumulating richness.

Trevor was born in Ireland in 1928 but has lived in England for many years. He began his artistic life as a sculptor and took up writing only in his mid-thirties. For a late starter his fictional resources are immense, and his output since his first novel, *The Old Boys* (1964), has a kind of Victorian abundance about it; there's a new book every year or so. In an age of magical realism, of mannerisms hankering to invigorate the language, Trevor comes from another tradition of writing entirely; his literary ancestors include Chekhov, Joyce (in *Dubliners*), and Katherine Mansfield, who in their different ways all practiced an art intent on exposing the hidden codes of conduct and the subtleties of a confined world. With his disdain of show, his sharp eye, and his disabused outlook, his prose might be the equivalent in fiction of the poetry of Philip Larkin.

Trevor moves with ease between the novel and the story. The early novels and the stories are cut from the same cloth, but later novels, such as *Fools of Fortune* (1983) or *The Silence in the Garden* (1988), dramatize a version of Anglo-Irish history that is passionate and fraught, haunted by a child's memory of the scent of sweet pea and rose, scarred by sectarian hatred and war. Their events take place across several generations, and the broad sweep of time is essential to Trevor's evocation of history as tragedy. These novels have the air of a lament for lost domain: the identification of writer with subject seems etched on their every page.

The stories in *Family Sins* are very different. By compressing his fiction into discrete entities, each a single concentrated movement, Trevor seems able to abstract himself from the predicaments that he explores. It is as if the constraints of the form permit a certain detached tone not as purely evident in the longer fiction. The sheer narrative strength of the stories suggests comparisons with Chekhov, but Trevor also calls to mind Joyce's potent image of the author as a godlike dandy, "paring his fingernails." For Trevor is a descendant of Flaubert, too, a realist who is also a satirist, a stylist who stares at his characters until they come clean.

Family Sins works much the same territory as Trevor's previous collections, though he no longer bothers with the metropolitan dandies he sent up in his earliest work. The stories are set on farms, in small-town pubs, country boarding schools, in both Ireland and England. Sometimes the locale is Europe—especially Italy—seen through a tourist's eyes. With the exception of the European figures, who are mostly misfits, the characters are defined by their ordinariness, the way they blend into their surroundings, a humdrum provincial world where everything, no matter how tawdry or tedious, has its niche, and where it seems that nothing can change. Without fuss, Trevor detonates whatever consolations this world might seem to offer, like a sniper picking off his target through the camouflage. The explosions the reader encounters along the way are caused when the characters brush against the truth.

In "A Trinity," a couple are mistakenly sent on the wrong package holiday, to Switzerland instead of Venice. Their fury at the travel agency that made the error is inconsequential: what they fear most is the mockery of the old man with whom they live, who has underwritten their holiday while he stays at home. A benign arrangement is finally understood by the reader as a shocking denial of independence, and the social comedy that sustains the action of the story withers at the conclusion. "Their first holiday since their honeymoon was paid for by the elderly man they both called Uncle," the story begins, as though nothing could be more innocent or charming. The closing paragraph, with its perfect rhythms and exquisite progression, is pitiless in its scorn for these puny creatures of the writer's imagination, falling asleep together in the wrong hotel:

> In the darkness they did not say that their greed for his money was much the same as his greed for their obedience, that greed nourished the trinity they had become. They did not say that the money, and the freedom it promised, was the galaxy in their lives, as his cruelty was the last pleasure in his. Scarcely aware that they held on to one another beneath the bedclothes, they heard his teasing little laugh while they were still awake and again when they slept.

Like many characters in Trevor's work, these are possessed by a despair they cannot themselves speak of. As the author speaks for them, the peculiar intensity of effect derives from the combination of intimacy and severity in his detailing of character. Pettiness, meanness, and persistent stupidity have had no better chronicler. There is nothing cathartic about these stories, never any hint of transcendence or release. No one escapes. Either nothing happens, or things get worse, or someone learns how terrible things were all the time. Experience is bitter, the stories say over and over, and knowledge is merely the loss of innocence. The stories project a Sisyphean horror of endless repetition, of seeing one's days stretch out ahead as if already known, already spent. In "A Husband's Return," Maura Brigid, whose husband has run off with her sister, rejects his overtures to return and understands that "people would be sorry for her, but they would always say it was her foolishness that had dragged the family through disgrace, her fault for marrying a scoundrel. In the farmhouse and the neighborhood

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that was the person she had become." For so many of the characters in these stories, the future—which Trevor remorselessly projects—is already behind them.

That's not to say that Trevor's stories lack suspense. In his superbly modulated, taut style, he probes the situations he sets up until what we had taken for granted may simply dissolve. The more we know the less we know, though the diminishing reality that Trevor presents never quite reaches degree zero. In the small world his characters inhabit and depend on, nothing lacks significance, and the buildup of tension can be inexorable. Nowhere is the streak of fatalism characteristic of Trevor's fictional consciousness better demonstrated than in "Events at Drimaghleen," a queasy thriller without a solution.

"Nothing as appalling had happened before at Drimaghleen," it opens, though without declaring what. Then the story introduces the McDowds, who "began the day as they always did" before discovering that their daughter Maureen has not been home the previous night. Her parents, "who did not say much to one another," drive to a neighboring farm, convinced that their daughter has eloped with Lancy Butler. "The little bitch," her father remarks on the way. The McDowds' second discovery of the morning is gruesome: the bodies of Maureen, Lancy, and his mother litter the farmyard, riddled with gunshot wounds.

A scenario is established by the local police: Mrs. Butler, always overprotective of her son, murdered Maureen in a fit of jealousy. Her son shot her, and turned the gun of himself. When two journalists from the city arrive, with money and questions, a different version emerges—it also fits the circumstantial evidence—and is published in an English Sunday newspaper: it was Maureen who held the shotgun that day, who slaughtered her lover and his mother before taking her own life. Her grieving parents understand that they have now lost more than everything, and the story finally becomes a somber meditation on journalistic ethics, though such a description betrays its resonant ambiguity and immense dramatic power. The closing tableau presents, in its quiet, painterly way, an indelible image of horror:

> . . . in the kitchen that looked different in Jeremiah Tyler's photograph Mrs. McDowd screamed. She sat at the blue-topped table with her lips drawn back from her teeth, one short shrill scream following fast upon another. Father Sallins did not again attempt to comfort her. McDowd remained by the window.

In "The Third Party," a man who no longer loves his wife, Annabella, meets her lover, Lairdman, in a pub. The conversation that is supposed to "clear the air" before she leaves her husband in fact ends up preserving the status quo. Boland, the cuckold, knows after their prickly talk that Lairdman will not have Annabella, not because he humiliates Lairdman—and he does—but because Boland finally discloses his wife's most intimate secret. The mystery is not so much whether Boland can be believed but what imperative prevents him from surrendering his wife. The story is about the way in which nothing happens. Boland himself cannot fathom it, and is left standing alone in Donovan's public house "wondering why he hadn't been able to let Lairdman take her from him."

The secret of Trevor's fiction is that he grasps the terror of the commonplace. The gaze in his stories can seem merciless, not because he is indifferent to his characters but because the force of his inquiry erodes the masks that they themselves show the world. His observation never flinches. The couple in "A Trinity" could not have children for fear of disturbing the old man: "There'd been an error when first they'd lived with him; they'd had to spend a bit terminating it." McDowd scratches "at his gray, ragged hair, which was a way he had when he wished to disguise bewilderment." His wife notices the journalist from the city "wasn't seedy but you could see she was insincere from the way her mouth was. You could hear the insincerity when she spoke." In the final story, Kathleen, a serving girl in a pub, is tormented by her "master," who comes up close behind her as she works and touches her hair and clothes. She plays over in her mind what she cannot see: his "scarlet complexion" and "spiky gray hair," the "odor of cigarette smoke" on his clothes. The conviction is all in the detail, and the detail is always precise. For the duration of the story, the characters stand before us, exposed as if spotlit, and then they shrink back into the world in which they were born and in which they will die.

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CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

When he asked me whether I personally had problems with the politics of the film, I replied that if I did it would have been a lot simpler to turn the film down along with the other 340 films that were never shown to the editorial committee. But I thought the film was interesting and compelling in many ways, and I put it into the screening process thinking that it would actually go on.

Weisberg excerpts from a letter I wrote to the filmmakers making it appear that I equate the National Endowment for Democracy with the CIA. The full sentence said that the NED was no more appropriate as a funder of an independent film "than would be the CIA or the U.S. Agency for International Development." In the context of my letter it's clear that my point here is that an agency whose mission is the generation of public support for U.S. foreign policy is not an appropriate funder for an independent film.

Weisberg obviously did not let the facts get in the way of his point of view.

MARC N. WEISS
New York, New York

The writer is executive producer of P.O.V.

Jacob Weisberg replies:

I didn't misquote, fabricate, or take out of context anything Marc Weiss said. I did, however, fail to cite Debra Hodgins, who represented the documentary on behalf of the directors, as the source of the information that Weiss objected to the film for having too many subtitles and presenting point of view as fact. Hodgins told me that Weiss raised these and other complaints with her in a telephone conversation after he first said no to the film in 1988. Hodgins responded to these objections in a point-by-point letter asking Weiss to reconsider his verdict. I seriously doubt Hodgins would have responded to criticisms Weiss never made.

I was unable to confirm that only one member approved of the film. Of the four committee members I was able to interview, only one said he had problems with it. In any case, as Weiss made clear to me, the decision to reject the film was his, not the advisory panel's. The argument that he would never have shown the film to his committee if he didn't like it just doesn't wash. No one in Weiss's position would want to reject a major work by a filmmaker as distinguished as Nestor Almendros without having a committee to hide behind.

Lastly, Weiss claims that an ellipse in my story distorts his reasons for objecting to NED funding. What I omitted merely adds ballast to a spurious argument for rejecting "Nobody Listened." The NED grant received by the filmmakers was earmarked for reprocessing after "Nobody Listened" was completed, and in no way violated public television guidelines. Weiss later apologized to the filmmakers for wrongly asserting that it did. Now he returns to his original position that NED funding was "inappropriate." It is clear that the complaint about NED was merely a pretext for rejecting a film Weiss didn't want in his series. •

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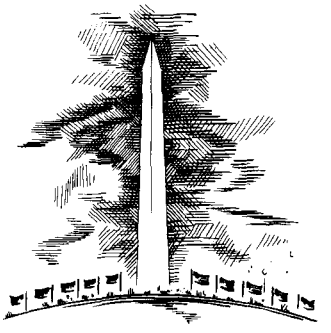
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Fighting words

IN DETROIT FOR THE FIRST TIME a weekend ago, I was struck by the extent of the city's decay. One drives through a landscape of broken warehouses, factories, and rubble-strewn lots that seems to have no boundary. Whole tracts of the urban center are visibly going to seed, undergoing a process not of gentrification but of ruralization. According to Isabel Wilkerson in *The New York Times*, the city government can't afford to hire the farm tractors that are required to cut the shoulder-high grass that is turning depopulated residential neighborhoods into weird savannas. There is no market for tens of thousands of abandoned homes. If preliminary census data is to be credited, Detroit experienced the most dramatic population decline of any American city, dropping from 1,203,339 residents in 1980 to 970,156 in 1990. Should the exodus continue at the present rate, what was once a city of nearly 2 million will be a ghost town by the mid-twenty-first century. The cityscape resulting from this demographic convulsion is sad and strangely beautiful. Detroit offers a haunting proleptic glimpse of urban America as a dead civilization: moldering, overgrown, and silent like the Mayan ruins of the Yucatan.

MOST WHITES LEFT DETROIT years ago, after the devastating riots of the 1960s. They live in prosperous suburbs that are less and less connected to the metropolitan remains. What's happening now is that middle-class blacks are leaving too, abandoning Detroit to an underclass that has neither the means nor the motivation to escape. Correction: one isn't supposed to call it the underclass anymore. Herbert J. Gans, a well-known sociologist who teaches at Columbia, has been arguing lately that the term is pejorative. In a September 10 op-ed piece in *The Washington Post*, Gans asserts that calling the jobless poor "underclass" stigmatizes them as undeserving and implies that they are to blame for their own poverty. "What grabs is the image of a growing horde of beggars, muggers, robbers, and lazy people who do not carry their part of the economic load, all of them threatening non-poor Americans and the stability of American society," Gans writes. His fellow sociologists concur. William Julius Wilson, author of *The Truly Disadvantaged*, announced in a speech to the American Sociological Association that he would follow Gans by forthwith eschewing "underclass" in favor of the term "ghetto poor." Wait a minute. I thought "underclass" was a straightforward way of describing an urban, non-working, uneducated lower class plagued by illegitimacy, crime, and drugs. To my ear, it doesn't blame anyone, certainly not the non-rich themselves, since it suggests that class dynamics, rather than individual vices, are at the root of the problem. Indeed, if the term didn't already exist, someone like Gans probably would have invented it. "Ghetto poor" positively reeks by comparison, conjuring the vision of a menacing lumpenproletariat. Maybe Wilson thinks that "underclass" is really a cant term, and is seizing the opportunity to strike a surreptitious blow for telling it like it is. In any case, I have to believe that we'd be closer to doing something about immiserated people in Detroit and elsewhere if we could talk about them directly, without having to cloak the discussion in politically correct terminology.



AN EVEN BOLDER ATTEMPT AT linguistic reform has emerged from Republican land. Gopac, a party auxiliary that assists candidates running for state legislatures around the country, has drawn up a list of the only 133 words candidates ever need to know. In a mailing headed "Language: A Key Mechanism of Control," the organization suggests that campaigners who want to "speak like Newt" (Representative Gingrich of the silver tongue, who chairs Gopac) should use "Optimistic Positive Governing Words" to describe themselves, while drawing from a list of pessimistic negative cowering words to "define" their Democratic opponents. The letter advises candidates to commit as many of these focus-group-tested terms as they possibly can to memory, and to use them as often as possible. Republican words include opportunity, truth, moral, courage, reform, prosperity, crusade, children, family, debate, compete, we/us/our, humane, liberty, commitment, unique, duty, precious, caring, tough, help, lead, vision, success, citizen, mobilize, light, dream, freedom, peace, rights, pioneer, proud, preserve, pro-flag, reform, eleminate [sic] goodtime in prison, strength, choice, incentive, hard work, initiative, and common sense. For the Democrats, the words are: decay, failure, collapse, deeper, crisis, destructive, destroy, sick, pathetic, lie, liberal, they/them, unionized bureaucracy, betray, shallow, traitors, coercion, hypocrisy, radical, waste, corruption, incompetent, permissive attitude, destructive [again], impose, self-serving, greed, insecure, anti-flag, anti-family, pessimistic, excuses, stagnation, welfare, corrupt, selfish, taxes, spending, shame, disgrace, bizarre, cynicism, cheat, steal, abuse of power, machine, bosses, obsolete, criminal rights, red tape, and patronage. Lying there on the page, the list seems like sort of a mail-order Newt Gingrich kit, the kind you can assemble at home with a few simple tools and a tube of glue.

IT ALSO SOUNDS UNcannily like the lexicon of Newt's alter ego, Bob Forehead, the helmet-haired, brain-dead congressman of Mark Alan Stamaty's *Village Voice* comic strip "Washingtoon." Representative Forehead is just the type of guy who begins the day with a simple sentence like "I have the vision to lead," before building to more complex comments like "My shallow opponent excuses destructive unionized bureaucracy." Finally he floats toward the top of the frame and emits a balloon filled with something truly tangled like: "We are mobilizing a children's crusade to eleminate goodtimes in prison." Or: "My opponent is an anti-flag traitor who wants to waste red tape." Gopac has opened new horizons in Foreheadism by devising an entire Newtonian argot based on coded name-calling and the power of positive thinking. With the list, the Republican Party openly proclaims its aspiration to the realm of pure political blather, where it doesn't matter if you make any sense at all so long as you look good in a suit and press the hot buttons.

AROUND THIS POINT, YOUR DIarist ordinarily begins to run out of steam, not to mention ideas. The reason is that last year's redesign of the magazine inadvertently created space for several hundred more words on this page. Formerly a vigorous sprint, the column is now a grueling marathon. Happily, we've come up with a solution that will add to the Diarist's visual splendor while making it less of an endurance test for writer and reader. Vint Lawrence, whose work is well known to NEW REPUBLIC readers, will contribute occasional drawings to spell those of us who tend to collapse short of the finish line. If all goes well, these will bear the same relationship to the text as do the little etchings and whatnot in *The New Yorker*. I.e., none.

JACOB WEISBERG

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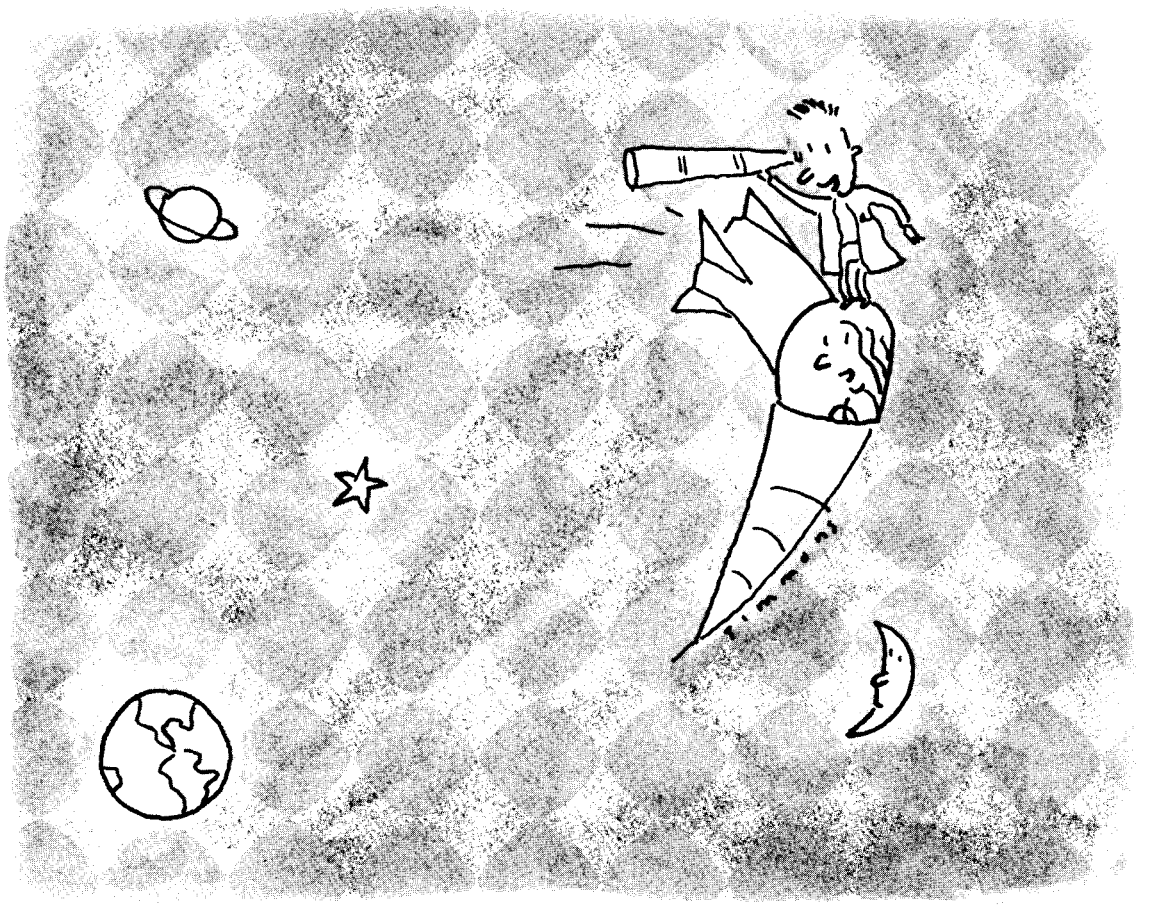

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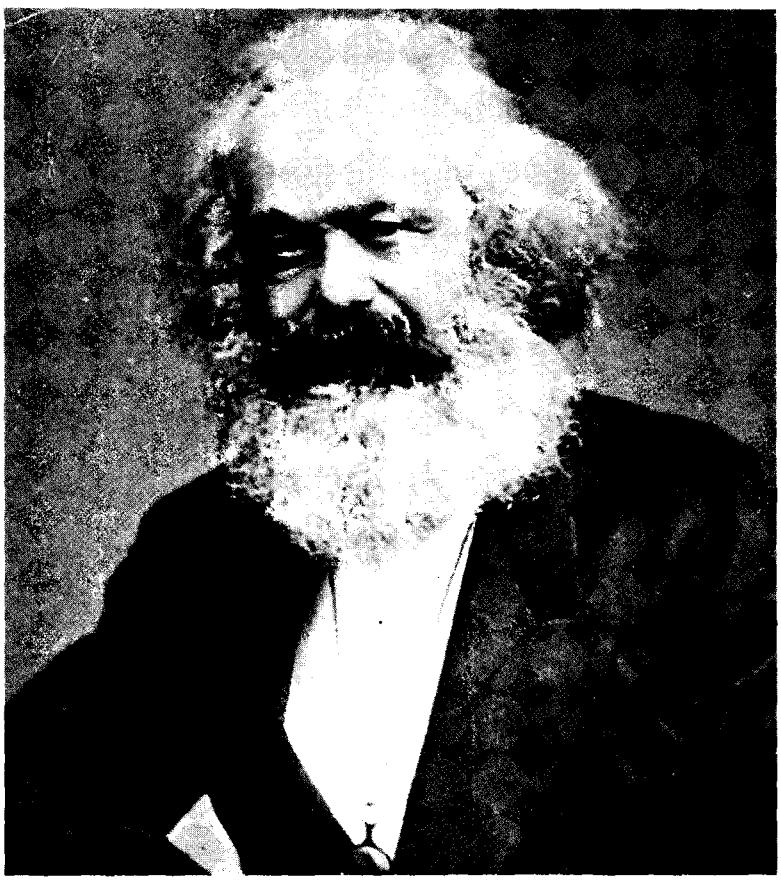

WE'RE HELPING EASTERN EUROPE TRADE MARX FOR DOLLARS.

The Bush administration recently established an Eastern European Growth Fund to encourage private investment in Central and Eastern Europe. The fund is to be administered through the U.S. government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and Salomon Brothers has been named both its investment advisor and manager.

We're pleased to play a part in the President's initiative.

While we make markets every day, it isn't often we get the privilege of helping develop a free one.

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